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# SPIN

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MARILYN MANSON**

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JUNE 2007

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Time was when being a rock star meant living large, acting crazy, and resembling an alien (or a poodle). But few of today's chart-toppers act—or even want to look—like rock stars. What ever happened to all that wonderful sleaze? **PLUS:** A pop quiz: Rock star or bartender? *BY DAVID BROWNE*

### 62 **Marilyn Manson**

How the absinthe-sipping, daylight-shunning, foot-fetishizing rock'n'roll vampire weathered a devastating breakup to create his rawest album yet. **PLUS:** A gallery of his grotesqueries. *BY JONATHAN AMES*

### 70 **The Spin**

#### Interview: Björk

The pride of Iceland reflects on life as a Sugarcube, working with Timbaland, and obsessing over Britney Spears' "knickers." **PLUS:** Her complete discography. *BY PHOEBE REILLY*

### 76 **Arctic Monkeys**

After a roller-coaster year, the record-setting next-generation Britpoppers are back—a little older, a lot wiser, and wearing much funnier outfits. **PLUS:** The most Englishest bands ever. *BY STEVE KANDELL*

### 80 **The Art of the Hustle**

Indie, *shindie*—what does it take to get a major-label deal nowadays? *Spin* hits the bricks with unsigned Atlanta rockers Uncrowned, rock's hungriest band. *BY CHARLES AARON*

#### ON THE COVER

Photographed exclusively for *Spin* by Richard Burbridge

Creative consultant: Mary Alice Stephenson

Styling by Luke Storey. Grooming by Mira Hyde, using Elemis products for makeup and Bumble and Bumble for hair (elemisagency.com). On Manson: Junker jacket and Henry Duarte shirt, jransomla.com.

"We were a bit frightened, so we put up this defense mechanism."

ARCTIC MONKEYS' ALEX TURNER, PAGE 76



A large photograph of a tropical beach scene. In the foreground, there is a field of tall, green grass. Several people are standing in the grass, looking towards the ocean. In the background, there are palm trees and a small hut with a thatched roof. The ocean is blue with some white surf visible.

# STRAY AWHILE

Sometimes you'll find little shacks and you'll be afraid to eat there because you might get sick, but sometimes it'll be the best food you've ever eaten."

—Fred Petacchia in Oaxaca, Mexico.







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# SPIN

## DEPARTMENTS

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Ozfest becomes *Festest*: new albums try to predict the future; the Spin 30; Young Jeezy withdraws; the Inquisition; Andrew WK provides nomination and advice; loudly, in my room with Dinosaur Jr.'s *Machine*; PLUS, Justice Vunbot, and Bonde Do Role are breaking out.

## 112 The Hidden Track

The best-selling author of *Heart-Shaped Box* takes his reading tour to German rock. Huber and discovers that David Mazzelbott's got nothing on him.

BY JOE HILL

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Brit sensation Lily Allen gets drunk on some San Diego love.

### 110 72 Hours

Experience Motor City madness with Spin's guide to Detroit.



Bonde Do Role, from left, on Rodrigo Gorky; Umiuz hoodie, \$75, burton.com. Quiksilver Limited T-shirt, \$60, quiksilver.com. On Marina Vello; Guess by Marciano T-shirt, \$34, guess.com. Levi's jeans, levi.com. Nooka watch, \$125, nooka.com. On Pedro D'Ery; Burton hoodie, \$60, burton.com. Quiksilver Limited T-shirt, \$60, quiksilver.com.

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## INSIDE SPIN CONTRIBUTORS



### Tina Tyrell

Photographer, *In My Room* (page 42)

↑ Though not a glamorous estate, the home of Dinosaur Jr.'s J Mascis still made Tyrell envious. "It was beautiful and old," she says. "Every single room was interesting, but I was drawn to his piano and Lifecycle." Tyrell has also shot for *Nylon* and *Jane*. Favorite album: The Isley Brothers' 3+3 First concert: George Michael, 1987



### Jonathan Ames

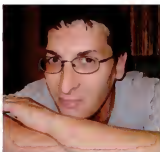
Writer, "Return of the Living Dead" (page 62)

← For Ames, the most surprising thing about Marilyn Manson was how familiar he seemed. "He reminded me of my childhood best friend," Ames says. The author of the novels *The Extra Man* and *Woke Up, Sir!*, Ames has also written for *The New York Times*. His graphic novel, *The Alcoholic*, will be out next year. First concert: Rush, 1981

### David Browne

Writer, "Rock Star! Rock Star?" (page 58)

→ Browne, who has written for *Entertainment Weekly* and *The New York Times*, is no stranger to destructive rock-star behavior. "Sometimes I stop on advance CDs I don't like," he says. He is the author of *Dream Brother: The Lives & Music of Jeff & Tim Buckley* and an upcoming biography of Sonic Youth. Greatest rock star of all time: Iggy Pop



### Misty Keasler

Photographer, "The Art of the Hustle" (page 80)

← Following unsigned rockers Uncrowned around Austin during South by Southwest, Keasler became convinced of their potential. "They are full of energy," she says, "and they feel like they're on the brink of something big." Her book, *Love Hotels: The Hidden Fantasy Rooms of Japan*, is out now. Favorite '90s albums: Ani DiFranco's *Living in Clip*





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## Roses & Clover



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Golden boy:  
Gerrit Graham in  
*Phantom*

## Where's the Beef?

MY IDEA OF THE PERFECT ROCK STAR is actually a character in a movie from 1974. He's called Beef, and he's the strapping yet preening singer played by Gerrit Graham in Brian De Palma's *Phantom of the Paradise*, one of only two films I ever sat through twice (*consecutively*) in a theater (the other was *Xanadu*—don't ask). Part David Bowie space cadet, part Alice Cooper monster masher, part Bea Arthur circa *Maude*, Beef assumes the posture and impetuousness of a hard-rock frontman and gets to utter such delicious bon mots as "Man, you better get yourself a castrato for this, 'cause it's a little out of my range." De Palma takes the term "shock rocker" to its literal extreme when he has Beef electrocuted mid-performance by a neon lightning bolt. Sure, caricatures probably don't come any broader, but what makes Beef so perversely appealing is that he's an awkward divo who will do *anything* to please a crowd, even if it means falling flat on his ass. He's what I always thought rock stars should be: sexy, dangerous, outrageous, and funny. And at least a little self-aware.

This month, rockers are taking center stage in these pages. Jeff Buckley biographer David Browne explores the nature of current rock stardom in a provocative essay, while novelist/raconteur Jonathan Ames spends a few wild nights with Marilyn Manson, who may very well be the last of a dying breed. Elsewhere, *Spin* music editor Charles Aaron gets extraordinary access to the members of the young Atlanta band Uncrowned, who want to be rock stars in the worst way. And they might just succeed—if they can stand to fall flat on their asses.

I'll shut up now and let the magazine do the talking.

*Doug Brod*

Doug Brod  
Editor



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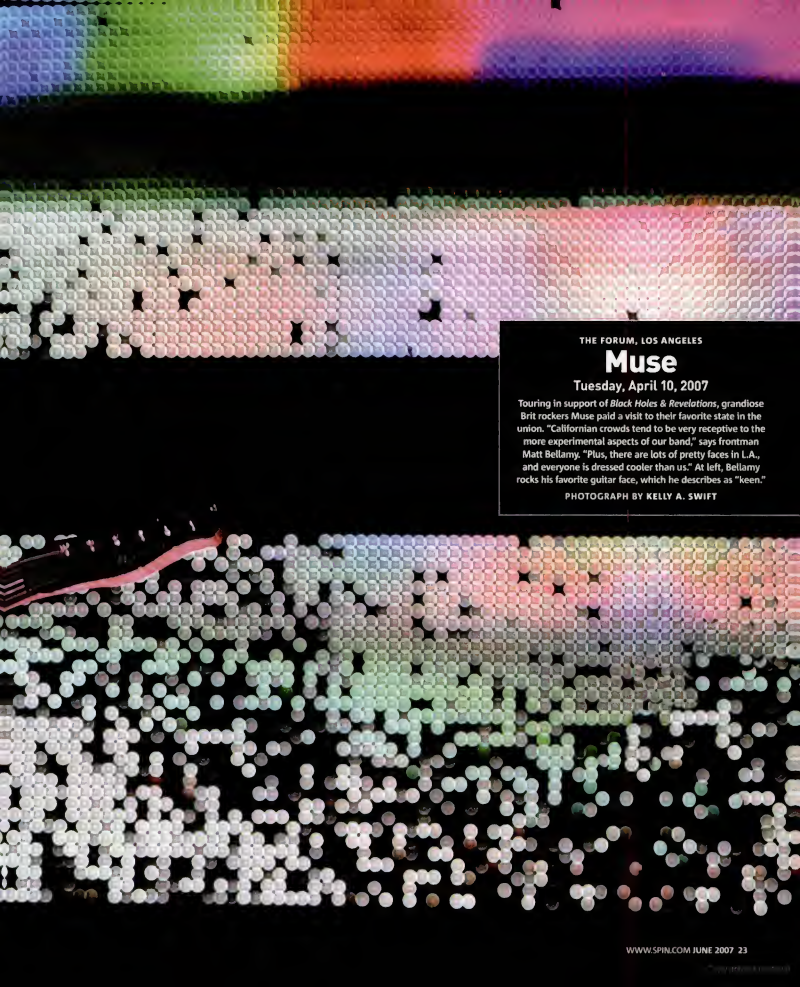
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SOUNDCHECK





THE FORUM, LOS ANGELES

## Muse

Tuesday, April 10, 2007

Touring in support of *Black Holes & Revelations*, grandiose Brit rockers Muse paid a visit to their favorite state in the union. "Californian crowds tend to be very receptive to the more experimental aspects of our band," says frontman Matt Bellamy. "Plus, there are lots of pretty faces in L.A., and everyone is dressed cooler than us." At left, Bellamy rocks his favorite guitar face, which he describes as "keen."

PHOTOGRAPH BY KELLY A. SWIFT







SKELLETONES, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

## Against Me!

Saturday, March 10, 2007

It's no secret that the rigors of touring can run a band down, and the always intense Against Me! sometimes need to take preventative steps. "We tried the lemon juice fast on this tour," says frontman Tom Gabel.

"We'd drink a glass of lemon juice, maple syrup, and cayenne pepper before we'd play. It's a great boost, but it's rough—I was the angriest person you've ever met."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL SCHIEK

SOUNDCHECK







20 WARREN ST., NEW YORK CITY

## The High Class Elite

Wednesday, March 7, 2007

At a loft party called *Shindig*, hosted by gutter-glam rockers the High Class Elite, frontman Franco V found himself in a familiar position: covered in gold and sprawled out on the floor. "I just jump, and whether they catch me is irrelevant," the singer explains. "I never feel it that night, but the morning after is always bad."

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDRZEJ LIGUZ

# Songs You Need to Download Now!

Go to **SPIN.com** for samples and links to these tunes, vid clips, and more



**1 Hurricane "A BAY BAY"** Hurricane is a Shreveport, Louisiana rap kid and "A Bay Bay" is slang meaning "Katrina may have destroyed our house, but this beat is feller than an insurance agent."

**2 Beth Ditto and Jarvis Cocker "TEMPTATION"** At this year's *NME* Awards, the Gossip's gale force of *f-you* sensuality faces off against Cocker's suave slither on this electrifying Heaven 17 cover.

**3 Paramore "MISERY BUSINESS"** These seasoned Tennessee pop punks are led by a reheaded teenager (Hayley Williams) with a fierce voice, simmering charisma, and finally, a chorus to match.

**4 Lil Wayne "WALK IT OUT"** Lil Wayne ain't half as historic as he and his bagmen think, but he can write a flashy crossword puzzle, and props for rhyming "Furymun" with "Paul Bunyan."

**5 Against Me! "WHITE PEOPLE FOR PEACE" LIVE AT THE KEY CLUB** Over a thick bed of thorny guitars, a new broadside from America's best punk band about the futility (and necessity!) of protest songs.

**6 Deemi "SOUNDTRACK OF MY LIFE"** Brooklyn single mother of two weathers domestic abuse, drugs, and despair, then cathartically belts out the year's most devastating R&B moment.

**7 Karen O and Kool Keith "THE TEASER"** From an unreleased 2005 porn-movie tribute album, she baby-tawks about ice cream while he fantasizes about Hooters shorts. Choice of lubricant: Lubriderm?

**8 Joanna Newsom "COLLEEN"** On this gorgeous picaresque, from a new three-song EP, the harpist darts and scampers in a more Irish trad-folk direction, grounded by banjo and accordion.

**9 St. Vincent "NOW.NOW."** Her walrusish presence and lilting voice peg Annie Clark, a.k.a. St. Vincent, as just another Björk wannabe—until her songs and guitar playing are pure enchantment.

**10 NYOIL "SHOUT IT IN THE STREETS"** The New York MC who caused a stink by saying "coon-ass rappers" (50 Cent, Cam'ron) should get "lynched" comes back breathing more fire.

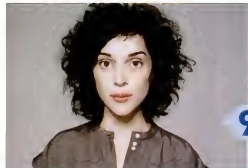
**11 Ted Leo "ROCK N ROLL DREAMS'LL COME THROUGH"** This breathless cover of "the greatest song ever written" (originally performed by comedic trickster Jon Wurster) makes "Born to Run" sound terse.

**12 White Rabbits "THE PLOT"** An indie-pop soul raver with a nonstop beat, atmospheric violin interlude, and raucous whoo-oh-oh refrain that gives the Style Council an open-throated headlin' shove.

**13 Spoon "YOU GOT YR. CHERRY BOMB"** With the tambourine, reverbed keyboards, and horn section threatening to build into a Spectoral "Wall of Sound," Britt Daniel stays pithy, playful, pointed—perfect.

**14 Department of Eagles "NO ONE DOES IT LIKE YOU"** Grizzly Bear's Daniel Rossen and college buddy Fred Nicolaus prove trip-hop isn't dead—it's just become a twinkly folk song in a doo-wop daze.

**15 Queens of the Stone Age "TURNING ON THE SCREW"** "The Big Beat" drum thud, migraine-groovy Greg Ginn guitar riff, a choir of disoriented meth dealers, and a creepy-crawl solo. Cult-inducing.



## Must-See Videos

### Alanis Morissette

#### "My Humps"

Canada's legendary queen of angst may be past her expiration date, and Black Eyed Peas are still insufferable, but when they come together, you get Internet magic. Morissette's piano-ballad makeover of a song about Fergie's ass is enough to make this clip a classic, but it's augmented by some awesomely dead-pan thugs and Alanis' willingness to cover herself in "Icys."

### Dizzee Rascal

#### "Sirens"

Police across England have been cracking down on young people who wear hoodies, suggesting that such "street clothing" is primarily worn by a criminal element. Here, Dizzee is chased out of his flat by a posse of top-hatted, bloodstained gentry on white horses. The savagery of this 21st-century fox hunt marks the first great piece of protest music of 2007.

### Blonde Redhead

#### "23"

Blonde Redhead's latest album is much more spare and atmospheric than previous efforts, and they've taken that concept literally on the record's first video, with soft-focus clouds wafting in and out of washed-out shots of the band. It's a mind-bender that plays tricks on the eye and perfectly meshes with the song's stuttering beat and Kazu Makino's siren vocals.



### Dan Le Sac vs. Scroobio Pip

#### "Thou Shalt Always Kill"

Over a meaty sucker punch of a backbeat and carnival-horror keyboards, an angry guy with a bushy beard and a baseball cap lays down the new commandments as he tears through the streets of London. Some of his excellent advice: "Thou shalt not attend an open mic and leave as soon as you've done your shitty little poem or song." Words to live by.

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## Brock Around the Clock

It's time to face facts: Modest Mouse are a definitive American indie-rock band ["Partners in Crime," April]. With the combination of Isaac Brock's savvy intelligence, Johnny Marr's mystique, and the rugged tunes on *We Were Dead Before the Ship Even Sank*, the band can now take its place beside legends like R.E.M. and the Replacements. All they needed was a little help from a Brit!

KEITH CORMIER  
MACON, GEORGIA

## Oberst, Last, Always

Thanks for the article on Conor Oberst ["The Spin Interview," April]. He's such a great role model and has a wonderful view on a number of issues. I especially enjoyed reading his quotes about our failed president to my father, who called Conor an ignorant child with his head up his ass. What he doesn't realize is that Oberst is the voice of a generation that I'm proud to be a member of.

ARI TRICKY  
GRASS VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

## SEEING DOUBLES

Look-alike? Or not?  
**Alex Kapranos**



**WILLIAM FOSTER** Age: 35 Life as Kapranos: "A lot of people ask me how I came to resemble him, but it also must be asked: How did he come to resemble me?"

Do you resemble a rockstar? Send us a photo and let us decide. E-mail a high-resolution .jpg file and your phone number to [seeingdoubles@spin.com](mailto:seeingdoubles@spin.com).



They fought the later: Modest Mouse

## Team Players

April's list of Rock's 25 Greatest Team-ups was great, but there were Sonic Youth and Jim O'Rourke? What about U.K.L.E., for that matter?

MATTHEW RITCHIE  
HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

Good try, but the list was rendered moot by the lack of Mos Def and Talib Kweli as Black Star. And don't even get me started on why "California Love" makes the list but Ice Cube's historic collaboration with the Bomb Squad goes unnoticed.

MONTY FRANKLIN  
SAN BERNARDINO, CALIFORNIA

How could you have Johnny Marr on the cover of an issue that features the best collaborations and not include Electronic, his team-up with Bernard Sumner of New Order?

DMITRY PAVLOVSKY  
CHICAGO

I hate to quibble, but while I was excited to see *MadVillainy* on



your list of the best collaborations, I have to say that both MF Doom and Madlib have done superior projects: Doom with Danger Mouse as *Danger Mouse* and *The Mouse & the Mask*, and

Lib's fantastic hookup with Jay Dee on the *Jaylib* records.

TERRY BLU  
LINCOLN, NEW JERSEY

Thank you for including the Pogues and Kirsty MacColl on your list of the ten best one-off team-ups ("Singles Going Steady," April). Now, if only you could have included a nice picture of the beautiful toothless wonder Shane MacGowan. *Sideste!*

JAMIE HENDEL  
GLENSIDE, PENNSYLVANIA

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After being shot for this month's cover, Marilyn Manson hung out with *SPIN.com* well into the night. Catch our candid video interview with the shock rocker. [www.spin.com/junecover](http://www.spin.com/junecover)

### → THE WALKMEN MEET SPIDEY

We visited the Walkmen's New York City rehearsal space and filmed the band playing "Red River," their song from the *Spider-Man 3* soundtrack. Watch the performance and see what the band had to say in our exclusive interview. [www.spin.com/spiderman3](http://www.spin.com/spiderman3)

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Check out our complete Coachella report (loaded with video interviews with your favorite desert-dwelling artists), and get ready for our Bonnaroo coverage, which kicks off in mid-June. [www.spin.com/coachella07](http://www.spin.com/coachella07) [www.spin.com/bonnaroo07](http://www.spin.com/bonnaroo07)

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This July, *SPIN.com* will be featuring some of the nation's top unsigned musicians as Artists of the Day. If you think you've got what it takes, post your band's profile, music, and videos at *SPIN.com* to be eligible! [www.spin.com/yourartistoftheday](http://www.spin.com/yourartistoftheday)

## The SPIN.com Poll

Marilyn Manson might be the last rock star, but who else could claim the title?

- A Jack White
- B Carlos D
- C Josh Homme
- D Kid Rock
- E Julian Casablancas
- F Trent Reznor

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# NOISE



## Kicks for Free

This summer, tickets to metal's biggest tour will cost nothing. Will this unprecedented move have Ozzfest flying high again, or is it a suicide solution?

BY DAVID PEISNER

**A**fter several years of watching Ozzfest's profits dwindle, Sharon Osbourne decided on a novel new approach. In February she and husband Ozzy, who launched the multiband metal tour in 1996, stunned the music industry when they announced that tickets to this summer's edition would be free.

"Every year, ticket prices go up and there's nothing you can do," she explains. "It's the cost of fuel, lights, sound, trucking. So you raise the ticket price. We can't keep doing it. So we turned around and said, 'Fuck it,

we'll charge nothing, get some sponsors to underwrite it, and get bands who really want to give something back to the fans to work for free."

Small and midlevel metal acts, including Lamb of God, Hatebreed, Lordi, and Nick Oliveri and the Mondo Generator, will fill out this summer's lineup, with Ozzy himself headlining. Sponsors, for their part, will be granted unprecedented access to concertgoers.

"We wanted the sponsors to be the winner, as far as putting the power in their hands to hook up fans," says Caroline Burruss, a sponsorship vice president at Live Nation, the tour's promoter.



**Metal Institution:** Mark Morton and the rest of Lamb of God at 2004's not-free Ozfest

What this will mean in practical terms is that the tour's three main sponsors—Monster Energy Drink, Jägermeister, and music retailer F.Y.E.—will offer codes for free tickets to anyone who registers on their respective websites. Additional ticket codes will be distributed with the purchase of Ozzy's new CD, in four- and eight-packs of Monster, and with an F.Y.E. preferred buyer's card, as well as at Jägermeister-sponsored events. As for fans who want to walk up and buy a ticket the day of the show, well...at press time Ozfest was still figuring out how that's going to work.

While the idea of a free tour sounds great, there are skeptics. "You will pay ten dollars for parking. Five for a water, eight to ten for a beer, 40 dollars for a shirt," read one post on the popular metal website Blabbermouth.net. "I will bet they raise the prices of everything."

"Absolutely not," Osbourne insists. "We're cutting the price of our merch all along the line, and concessions will be exactly the same price as for every other Live Nation show."

In addition to questions about the ticketing particulars, there have also been concerns about security and whether the relative lack of marquee names will attract the roughly 17,000 attendees per show that last year's tour pulled in (one sponsor predicts crowds of 25,000 to 40,000). Even Osbourne admits that within the music biz, people are rooting for this experiment to fail, but it's the implication that Freefest might lead to chaos and violence that ranks her. "I've heard the most

disgraceful comments you could ever imagine—that we're getting the scum coming to our shows because it's free," she says. "I wonder if you're going to get the scum at the [Live Earth] global warming shows because they're free."

"People in the industry don't like that it's a free show, because it sends the wrong message," says Gary Bongiovanni, editor-in-chief of *Pollstar*. "This is a show that's worth money, and people should pay for it. It's cheapening the product by giving it away for free." "That's bullshit," Osbourne says.

**"The Stones played for two million people for free. Did that devalue them? Obviously not."**

SHARON OSBOURNE



"The Rolling Stones can go to Brazil and perform to two million people for free. Did that devalue them? Obviously not." She maintains that the industry's resistance stems largely from the fact that she has convinced bands to play for nothing.

"Band fees are getting ridiculous," she says. "Bands that go on before Ozzy have been earning more than Ozzy. For the last three years, we haven't made money, and not because of lower ticket sales. It's the cost of bands. Agents are asking too much. Managers are asking too much. People are picking on us because the fucking agents are not getting any commission from this tour. We paid System of a Down \$350,000 per show last year. So add that up over 25 shows and see what an agent would earn."

In addition to eliminating talent fees, Osbourne has also streamlined much of Ozfest's production budget. ("At the end of the day, no kid goes home and says, 'I'm going back to see that light show,'" she says.) But even with the spending cuts, Bongiovanni is not convinced that Ozfest's business model will work. "If the tour is successful, they maybe break even. That's about as good as it's going to get," he says. "There's just not enough money floating around out there."

Osbourne agrees Ozfest is unlikely to turn a profit this year, but maintains that with bigger sponsors kicking in more money, the idea might catch on: "This isn't going to become a model; it's not going to change the touring industry. But it could become something that could happen on a regular basis."

If so, that might have a chilling effect on some bands' ability to score well-paying gigs. With CD sales in an industrywide free fall, for many artists, touring represents their primary income source. If Freefest is successful, more tour promoters may reconsider how—or even if—they'll pay bands.

Mark Morton, guitarist for Lamb of God, was happy to sign on for this summer's Ozfest, largely for the exposure (his band plays right before Ozzy on the main stage), but he admits he's wary about the future. "We've got a dozen people that tour with us, two buses, a tractor trailer—it's not like we can just cruise around to every church picnic and play for free," he says. "If the music industry changes to where bands have to ride around playing free shows for the rest of their career, I might have to go back to putting roofs on houses."

## Great Moments in Freedom



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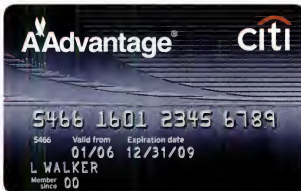
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# Young Jeezy

BY DAVID PEISNER

**T**he offices of Young Jeezy's Corporate Thugz Entertainment live up to their name: Tucked into an industrial park on Atlanta's west side, the workplace is sterile save for the dozen or so intimidating characters lounging around. "In spite of all the gang members you see," says Jeezy (Jay Jenkins), 29, with a raspy laugh, "this is a real business." And with two platinum albums—2005's *Let's Get It: Thug Motivation 101* and last year's *The Inspiration*—as well as *Cold Summer*, the just-released record by his USDA crew, business is good. Of course, this has only stoked the haters who claim he's a minor talent on the mic with a major talent for self-promotion. What does the Snowman have to say for himself?

## What are your greatest strengths as a rapper?

My greatest strengths are as a hustler. I understand both worlds: I can sit down and have a marketing meeting with L.A. [Reid] and the Def Jam team, then leave back out that door and go to Harlem and be with my homeboys. I ain't want to pay to see a nigga because he can rap good—you're not into the skills, you're into his mind state. So rap your ass off—and when you realize that making an album is 5 percent of the business, then you understand that shit is nothing. You know how many people made an album today?

## Does it bother you when people say you're not a great lyricist?

Who gives a fuck? We selling records! When you get done, we'll line our bank accounts up and see what's cracking. I try to have as much fun in the booth as I can, to style a little bit, but it ain't about that to me. My whole goal is to touch the hearts of men.

## The first USDA single is "White Girl," yet another song about coke. Do you worry about being pigeonholed as a one-trick pony?

I came in who I was, and I'm gonna remain that person. I ain't ashamed of that

shit. But I'm gonna grow. I'm gonna do better. I'm gonna do different things.

## Do you think your songs glamorize drug dealing?

I wouldn't say that. Because the things I say mean so much to so many people. I'll take you around the corner right now and you'd think I was Muhammad Ali or something.

## But does that justify everything?

Well, do you please the people who love you and buy your shit, or do you try to please the people that don't understand your world and don't really give a fuck? What can I rap about? I'm not a plumber, I can't rap about pipes. I'm not a roofer, I can't rap about houses. I am who I am. So when is it not cool to be you no more? You've gotta give a person a chance to grow on their own time. On the third album, I could see somebody questioning something, but you ain't give me a chance to really grow.

## On *The Inspiration*'s "Bury Me a G," you say, "Lord forgive me for every gram I sold, every Glock I popped, every rock I shopped." Are you sorry for the path you've taken?

Naw. I just don't think I said enough times that what I did wasn't right. I'm not ignorant. I did what I had to. My sister went to college, other motherfuckers made it out of high school; I didn't do none of that. I was in jail every other week, a shoot-out every other day. And I made it. You can't take that away from me.

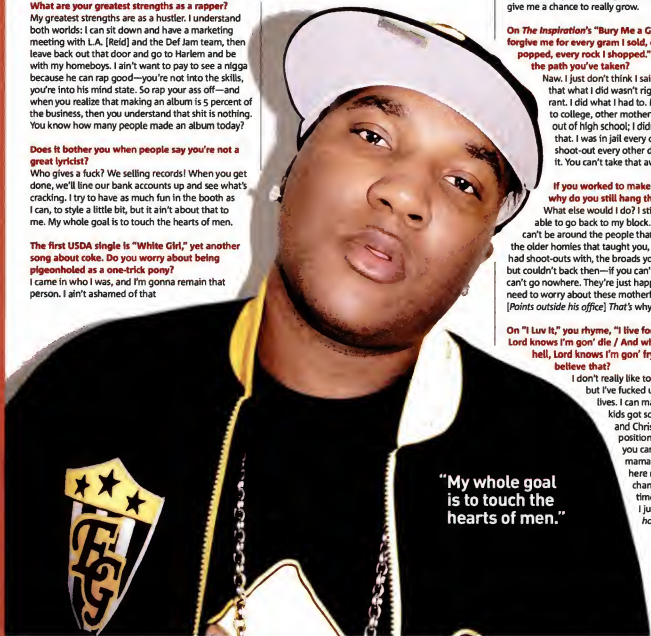
## If you worked to make it off the streets, why do you still hang there?

What else would I do? I still want to be able to go back to my block. Because if you can't be around the people that raised you, the older homies that taught you, the niggas you had shoot-outs with, the broads you wanted to hit but couldn't back then—if you can't go home, you can't go nowhere. They're just happy to see me. I need to worry about these motherfuckers out here. [Points outside his office] That's why I'm strapped.

## On "I Luv It," you rhyme, "I live for the moment, Lord knows I'm gon' die / And when I get to hell, Lord knows I'm gon' fry." Do you really believe that?

I don't really like to get into that shit, but I've fucked up a lot of people's lives. I can make sure niggas' kids got school clothes and Christmases. I'm in a position to do that. But you can't tell nobody's mama, if her baby ain't here no more; you can't change that. But some-time you gotta pay. I just wanna know how I gotta pay.

"My whole goal is to touch the hearts of men."



# Time Out of Mind

Three new albums offer visions of the future, but are any of them realistic? And how do they compare with the grandpappy of dystopian discs, Rush's 2112? *The New York Times'* futurist-in-residence—it is too a job!—Michael Rogers weighs in.



## RUSH 2112

**CONCEPT:** After losing a space war in 2062, Earth falls under the oppressive rule of the alien priests of Synrix, who censor art and music. One day in 2112, a human finds a guitar and starts to play. The aliens smash his ax and an even bigger space war ensues! **FUTURIST SAYS:** "The narrative is fabulous. But the anti-art, religion-driven autocracy is similar to what we have on Earth now. If that continues, we'll destroy ourselves before we achieve the interstellar travel that's implied here." **WE SAY:** No guitars? Aliens who sing like someone set their phasers to "castrate"? Cancel that appointment at the cryogenics lab.

## NINE INCH NAILS Year Zero

**CONCEPT:** Terrorists plant a dirty bomb at the 2009 Oscars and the U.S. retaliates with nuclear strikes against Iran and North Korea, kicking off World War III. The government spikes our water supply with a drug it claims negates the effects of bioterrorism. **FUTURIST SAYS:** "The international scenarios are quite plausible. It's unlikely that terrorists could get a dirty bomb into the theater, but that's exactly what a good jihadist would aim for." **WE SAY:** Silly Trent—bombs don't make it to the Oscars!



## KLAXONS Myths of the Near Future

**CONCEPT:** The good news: These nu-ravin', glow-stick-wavin' Brits claim this loose narrative is the first part of a three-album cycle. The bad news: Thanks to the band's belief in psychic Edgar Cayce's theory that the apocalypse will arrive in 2012, there isn't much future to sing about. **FUTURIST SAYS:** "I think 2012 is definitely early for the world to be ending, but Klaxons get bonus points for bringing raves back. We forget how often the future repeats the past." **WE SAY:** If raves are truly coming back into style, these are gonna be five long years.

## SATELLITE PARTY Ultra Payloaded

**CONCEPT:** A group of environmentalists and musicians (and Fergie) resolve to stop global warming. They have a party aboard a space station and, somehow, Jim Morrison shows up. He sings a song and tells them to do something about the melting ice caps. Or...something. Hey, remember "Mountain Song"? **FUTURIST SAYS:** "Global warming will be the big issue for the next 20 years. Droughts, floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes—they'll all get worse. Can rock stars help? Bono, maybe, Jim Morrison, I'm not so sure about." **WE SAY:** If the cover is any indication, people in the future don't know how to use Photoshop. **LANE BROWN**



## The Spin 20

Ranking on Pop Culture Since 1998  
BY DAVE ITRKOFF

- 1 **AMERICAN IDOL IN CHINA** Let us know when they eliminate the first 32 million contestants
- 2 **THE KILLERS AND OASIS REMAKE SGT. PEPPER'S** Just a warm-up for when they rewrite the Bible
- 3 **THE END OF WEEDHARE.COM** Most misleading website name since dvdbeeper.com
- 4 **THE HEARTWARMING COMEDY OF KNOCKED UP** The most compelling argument for abstinence since chlamydia
- 5 **MTV'S ROCK BAND, THE VIDEO GAME** If you can get them to play your video, you win
- 6 **THINGS NO ONE WANTS TO SEE AT AL GORE'S LIVE EARTH** Concerts' Row after row of private jets, James Blunt
- 7 **FORBIDDING PARENTS TO NAME THEIR DAUGHTER METALLICA** Everyone knows it's a boy's name
- 8 **WEARING YOUR STROKES T-SHIRT THROUGHOUT THE TRANSFORMERS MOVIE** Almost as cool as playing with Transformers
- 9 **THE LEO ZEPPELIN ROLLER COASTER** You must swallow at least this much of your own vomit to ride this ride
- 10 **DIE HARD 4** In 24 hours, the terrorists blow up Bruce Willis' nursing home
- 11 **LIFE AFTER DON IMUS** We can never watch his *Scinfeld* reruns again
- 12 **AT LAST, THE TRAVELING WILBURYS' ANTHOLOGY** Featuring lost Wilburys Kenny Rogers, Yarni, Dr. Teeth, and Count Chocula



- 13 **LEARNING OF THE ROBERT SMITH/ASHLEE SIMPSON COLLABORATION** Turns out boys do cry, after all
- 14 **UPDATING NANCY DREW FOR THE 21ST CENTURY** In her new mystery, *The Case of the Total Bitch Who Hacked My Facebook Page*
- 15 **THE SECRET ONE-TIME LIBERTINES SHOW** At which Pete Doherty is briefly reunited with his marbles
- 16 **PAYING FORMER 90210 STARS TO APPEAR IN PLAYGIRL** Please, oh please, let it be Joe E. Tata
- 17 **KURT VONNEGUT, R.I.P.** Best known, of course, for his cameo in *Back to School*
- 18 **THE SURPRISE ENDING OF THE PUSSYCAT DOLLS TV SHOW** We never masturbated to a single episode
- 19 **U2'S SPIDER-MAN BROADWAY MUSICAL** Our WTF sense is tingling
- 20 **THE JON BON JOVI ACTION FIGURE** Nice package

INTRODUCING

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NOISE

"Shift your attitude from  
*I need to to I want to!*"

Andrew W.K. and the  
author, photographed  
for Spin in New York City,  
March 30, 2007



# The Power of Positive Puking

Headbanger/motivational speaker Andrew W.K. becomes our life coach for a day BY JESSICA COEN

**E**xistential discussions may not seem to mix with kegstand anthems, but to Andrew W.K., the relentlessly sweaty rocker who has advised the world to both "Party Hard" and "Party 'Til You Puke," the two go together like, well, having fun and regurgitating. While he opens a club in New York, releases last year's Import-only *Close Calls With Brick Walls* domestically, and preps two other albums, our knight in white denim makes time to share his positive-thinking philosophies with equally enthusiastic audiences on his High-Way Party Cruiser tour. I'm not afraid to admit I have issues, and while they're nothing an overpaid shrink can't tackle, why lie on a musty couch when I could be guided down the path to self-improvement by guy who smashes his own face with cinder blocks?

## RELATIONSHIP DRAMA

Even though I adore my otherwise perfect boyfriend, his army of female friends irrationally infuriates me.

**ANDREW SAYS:** "Say to yourself, 'I am happy, I love this man, I love this relationship.'"

**IN ACTION:** When my boyfriend goes to meet an ex for drinks, I feel a tantrum coming on. I repeat Andrew's rainbows-and-warm-fuzzies mantra, occupying my mind just enough to avoid lunatic girl-rage.

## SELF-ASSERTION IN THE WORKPLACE

I'm having a rough time getting my coworkers on board with a project.

**ANDREW SAYS:** "Shift your focus and energies from obsessing over what is bad, and constantly challenge yourself to find the good element."

**IN ACTION:** I go into a tough meeting thinking happy thoughts, and my enthusiasm is contagious. I emerge victorious, with key people enlisting in my cause.

## CREATIVE STAGNATION

I've got writer's block—no ideas, no motivation.

**ANDREW SAYS:** "It's your mind's way of telling you to open up and relax. Give yourself the benefit of the doubt that you are perfect. You are about to do, in whatever time it comes, that 'perfect thing.'"

**IN ACTION:** I quit thinking about creative projects and instead take more naps. Let's check back in six months and see where this has gotten me.



The only known shot of Andrew sitting—at a speaking engagement, Austin, Texas, 2007

## FINANCIAL WORRIES

I know I owe a lot in taxes, but I'm too paralyzed by fear to even call my accountant.

**ANDREW SAYS:** "Think, 'Paying this money allows me to live here.' Don't panic."

**IN ACTION:** I finally call the bean counter, but subsequently keep "forgetting" to send him my documents—clearly, I'm so not panicked I'm downright nonchalant.

## BODY IMAGE

I need to buy a swimsuit, but I haven't been to the gym since February 2006.

**ANDREW SAYS:** "Change your expectations of the ideal. Tell yourself, 'I wanted to look like I look, or else I wouldn't look this way.'"

**IN ACTION:** I try on a fetching bikini and actually like what I see in the mirror, even the mushy spots. But thanks to the good folks at the IRS, it's gonna take more than a pep talk to make this purchase a reality.

## MORE WITH THE BODY IMAGE

I haven't been to the gym since February 2006.

**ANDREW SAYS:** "Shift your attitude from 'I need to' to 'I want to.' The motivation should come from within; if it's external, you put it off."

**IN ACTION:** At the gym, I tell myself that I want to take care of my body, but not even Andrew W.K. can ease the pain caused by an unforgiving spinning-bike seat.

## Buzzcatcher

UNDER THE RADAR AND BLASTING FROM OUR OFFICES

### Black Tie Revue

**WHO:** Boys next door (if you live in Pittsburgh) toss off ebullient guitar pop highlighted by an overactive organ and loaded with choruses that are never less than infectious. **LATEST:** *Code Fun* (Gear-head) **FOR FANS OF:** Weezer, Phantom Planet

### Handsome Furs

**WHO:** Wolf Parade's Dan Boeckner got together with his fiancée, Alexei Perry, and the world's most realistic-sounding drum machine, and created songs to evoke those days when everything is perfect, but you're inexplicably depressed anyway. The anti-Mates of State. **LATEST:** *Plague Park* (Sub Pop) **FOR FANS OF:** Arcade Fire, Bryan Ferry

### David Vandervelde

**WHO:** Though he began his career scoring films, the Chicago-based singer/songwriter's tunes are not background music; they're rambling stories about the lonely and the stoned. **LATEST:** *The Moonstation House Band* (Secretly Canadian) **FOR FANS OF:** Wilco, Jonathan Richman

### Simian Mobile Disco

**WHO:** James Ford and Jas Shaw used to be in the early-'00s Brit dance-rock group Simian, for whom they crafted anthemic clumps of druggy magic. These days, they're more interested in building gloriously noisy disco creations for the likes of Muse, Klaxons, and now, themselves. **LATEST:** *Attack Decay Sustain Release* (Wichita) **FOR FANS OF:** LCD Soundsystem, the Go Team

### The Teeth ↓

**WHO:** This Philadelphia quartet takes the hookiness and sexiness of classic Britrock and shoots it through with Midwestern ruggedness and moody psychedelia. **LATEST:** *You're My Lover Now* (Park the Van) **FOR FANS OF:** The Kinks, the Shins



## In My Room

## J Mascis

The once and future  
**Dinosaur Jr.** leader invites  
us into his living room

**1 J MASCIS JAZZMASTER GUITAR**

"I designed this with Fender; my signature's on the headstock. The first guitar I got was a Jazzmaster—I wanted a Strat but couldn't afford it. The store was called Slimy Bob's Guitar Rip-off."

**2 ACE FREHLEY DOLL** "I got that in 1990, maybe, in Australia. I traded some T-shirts for it. Growing up, I was into punk rock and didn't like Kiss, but my friend in college turned me on to them, and I got into Ace's guitar playing."

**3 CAPTAIN SCARLET DVDS** "I was obsessed with the show as a kid. Captain Scarlet and Captain Black somehow get irradiated, and Black turns into a bad guy. The Mysterons are pissed aliens who want to destroy Earth."

**4 STEINWAY PIANO** "It's from 1889 or something. I only play it once in a while or when I'm recording other bands here."

**5 TONY BENNETT LITHOGRAPH** "That was my high point and low point in showbiz all at once. I got to play 'St. James Infirmary' with him for MTV *Unplugged*, but when they aired it, they cut me out. So he gave me this print of one of his paintings and wrote me a nice note."

**6 PHOTO OF "LIVING SAINT" AMMA** "She goes on tour like a band, hugging people. You get a ticket and a number to hug her. In India she'll hug, like, 20,000 people a day. Some people think her hugs can be healing—she once healed this leper by licking the pus out of his sores."

**7 LIFECYCLE** "I use it, but I don't like it. It's the least offensive form of exercise, I guess, 'cause you can watch TV."

**8 DEEP WOUND SWEATER** "Deep Wound was my hardcore band in high school. This was the only sweater my mom ever made for me."

**9 DYSON VACUUM** "I was on a plane in '91 going to London, and the Dyson guy was on the TV. I got really obsessed. When I landed, I went to see Kevin Shields of My Bloody Valentine, and he had one. Ten years later I already had two vacuums, and Dyson finally got the license to put them out here. But they made a purple one for pet hair, and I had to have it. It's bulletproof—you can shoot it."

**10 SONIC YOUTH/DINOSAUR FLYER**

"That was designed by Maura Jasper, who did our first three album covers. I think that's from 1985, and the show never even happened. I don't remember why." STEVE KANDELL



## MORE ABOUT J MASCIS

In addition to being a veritable museum of indie rock and the childhood home of Uma Thurman, Mascis' purple-shuttered Amherst pad served as the studio for *Beyond* (Fat Possum), the first Dinosaur Jr. record in 18 years to feature the once-disgruntled Lou Barlow. So was it just like old times? "Not really," J shrugs. "New times."



J Masci, photographed  
for *Spin* in Amherst,  
Massachusetts, April 11, 2007  
PHOTOGRAPH BY TINA TYRELL

# 2033



FROM THE EDITORS  
OF NERVE



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# bonnaroo

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 LIVE WEBCAST





**2 A'BURY GOOD TIME**  
Glastonbury Festival has become the most storied of European rock festivals. Director Julien Temple's *Glastonbury* (THINKFilm), on DVD, features performances from the likes of the Velvet Underground (above), the White Stripes, and the Kinks. Bonus: commentary by quick-witted Britpop dandy Jarvis Cocker.



**3 PALE AND SOBER**  
Driving drunk in a convertible in the desert is a bad idea. Avoid a DUI and melanoma with Urban Junkie's alcohol breath and UV warning tester.

**1 DO YOU SHOOT THEM IN THE AIRHEAD?**  
If the undead ever take over, what will become of our stars? Topps' Hollywood Zombies trading cards imagine what reanimated spotlight hounds like Paris Hilton and Hulk Hogan might look like. Scary.

# The Honor Roll

These are a few of our favorite things

**4 NEVER MIND THE CROSS-STITCH**  
Punks have always loved needles (and safety pins), and now they can get their hookup in a safer (not to mention more grand-motherly) fashion with two books, *Punk Knits* (Stewart, Tabori & Chang) and *Pretty in Punk* (Chronicle Books).



## ROBO-RAGA

**6** Developed by students at the University of Pennsylvania, the **RAVI-Bot** mimics Beatles-beguiling sitar hero Ravi Shankar's string-plucking style and improvisation methods. No word on whether it will sire a NORAH-Bot that plays like jazz.



## ON THE ROAD

**5** In rapid succession, K. Thor Jensen lost his job, his girlfriend, and his apartment, and then September 11 happened, so he took off on a Greyhound bus to crisscross the country. *Red Eye, Black Eye* (Alternative Comics) beautifully captures his misadventures.



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Gaspard Augé and  
Xavier de Rosnay,  
photographed for *Spin*  
in New York City,  
March 29, 2007

# Justice

Metallica-lovin' French electro duo are—how you say?—le merde

**B**ummed by the weak coffee at a New York diner far from home, the two Frenchmen who call themselves Justice need a jolt. The more talkative one—a spindly 24-year-old in a black leather jacket named Xavier de Rosnay—flags down a waiter to order a Coke and an espresso. The other, Gaspard Augé, 27, slabs a fried egg and launches into a riff dividing current dance fare as too strict, cold, and clinical. "Most electronic music is too behaved!" he says, yolk oozing over his plate.

Raw and combative as their own music may be—they mischievously take a page out of Prince's playbook by christening

their American debut the unpronounceable glyph  $\text{†}$ —Justice themselves are quite well behaved. They talk in hushed tones and with the comic air of apology that surrounds foreigners using a language they only kind of know. The Paris natives started off playing Nirvana and Metallica cover bands—"Really bad cover bands," Augé clarifies sheepishly—but they were equally enthralled by the synthetic racket of the Chemical Brothers, Basement Jaxx, and above all, a couple of hometown *hommes* made good. "Daft Punk were the most important act in French music," gushes de Rosnay. "They were big for people like us, who didn't know the history [of the genre]. They helped bring us to electronic music."

## FAST FACTS

→ De Rosnay and Augé first bonded over their love of *Buggles*, of "Video Killed the Radio Star" fame.

→ Seeking a change of scenery to record the new album, the duo moved from de Rosnay's bedroom to his basement. "It's not really a studio," he admits. "It's more like a cave with a computer in it."

True to the philosophy of their label, Ed Banger Records, a Parisian concern with a head for the flashing lights of discos and the thrashing nights of rock clubs, "Waters of Nazareth" posits menacing synthesizer swells over thwacking beats, while "Phantom" sounds like—surprise!—an overcaffeinated metalhead's idea of techno. When he's asked what sets Justice apart from the countless other acts bringing rock scruffiness to the dance floor, de Rosnay's accent proves too thick to understand, so he ends up scrawling two words on a notepad: "baroque" and "apocalypse." Even if they don't necessarily answer the question, he smiles, pleased at how the words signify his sound and the happy accidents that arise when twiddling with electronic gear. "As long as you have ideas," he says, "you can do anything you want."

BY ANDY BATTAGLIA  
PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW SALACUSE

# NEVER HIDE

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GENUINE SINCE 1937





**Eggcellent:** Jason Chronis, Matt Simon, Mitch Calvert, Ramesh Srivastava (seated), and Jared Van Fleet

# Voxtrot

Angry-twee Texans battle technology...using computers!

**R**amesh Srivastava, leader of Austin, Texas quintet Voxtrot, is a man in conflict. You might not hear it in his music—a confident fusion of post-punk and breezy piano pop—but there's a battle of *Fight Club*-ian proportions raging between two halves of the 24-year-old singer/guitarist.

In one corner is the affable Srivastava, who is unfailingly polite to strangers bearing tape recorders and notebooks. In the other is the "miserable fuck" and "tireless bore" he describes in the lyrics to "Kid Gloves." "I was so stressed out making this record that there weren't many other ways to say it," he says. After early EPs turned

Srivastava and his bandmates—Mitch Calvert (guitar), Jared Van Fleet (keyboards), Jason Chronis (bass), and Matt Simon (drums)—into everybody's new MySpace friends, the sessions for their self-titled debut album were plagued by an overly assertive Internet fan club. "I read everything people said about us online," says Srivastava. "All the hype and expectation spun out of control. It became an interactive experience, like *Snakes on a Plane*."

But while a certain part of him has had it with all the motherfucking blogs on the motherfucking blogosphere, another part actually publishes one (thevoxtrot.kid.blogspot.com), wherein he ralls against...blogs.

## FAST FACTS

→ Amazingly, Srivastava only learned to tune his own guitar this year, and he still doesn't know how to change a string.

→ Keyboardist Van Fleet sometimes performs solo as Sparrow House.

→ Srivastava idolizes Paul McCartney. "The wusses are the ones people relate to," he confesses.

His rocky relationship with technology cost him the chance to work with at least one top producer. "I got in a spat with Ken Nelson, the guy that did Coldplay's albums," he says, recalling his insistence on recording to analog tape. "But why should the biggest producer in the world listen to some punk kid that doesn't want to use Pro Tools?"

It must have been the frontman's more congenial half that asked Victor Van Vugt (Nick Cave, Beth Orton) to produce Voxtrot (Playloder/Beggars Group), which retains the delicate jangle of their early material, while infusing dance-rock exercises like "Firecracker" and "Brother In Conflict" with combustible energy. "Victor helped us sound more aggressive," says Srivastava, who admits he'd originally conceived the group as "the next fey-indie band." "We used to be twee. Now we're angry." Actually, they're both.

BY LANE BROWN  
PHOTOGRAPH BY REBECCA MILLER

# NEVER HIDE



GENUINE SINCE 1937

# Bonde Do Role

Meet the Courtney Love of Brazilian baile funk



Pedro D'Eyrot, Marina Vello, and Rodrigo Gorky, photographed for Spin in New York City, March 30, 2007

**M**arina Vello, a vision in bright yellow eye shadow and messy black bangs, is shouting something in Portuguese, stretching a metallic-blue Lycra-stirrup leg over the monitor at the edge of the stage at the Brooklyn club Studio B. Wrapping the mic chord around her neck and left wrist, she finds her footing and reaches her right hand out into the crowd, which is going appropriately batshit. She can't seem to get close enough, so she jumps right in, the dislocated arm from an ill-advised stage dive a few months back a nonfactor. Pretty rock-star, considering Bonde Do Role aren't really a rock band.

Though her antics suggest her idol Courtney Love, the 22-year-old MC for this Brazilian trio (pronounced bon-juh doh ho-ly and named for their favorite hometown snack shop) actually trades in a mutant strain of baile funk—a whiplash-inducing mix of Miami bass, samba drums, Alice in Chains riffs, and lascivious rapping that originally hails from the favelas (shantytowns) of Rio de Janeiro. Hours before this typically raucous show, Vello recalls her rock'n'roll roots: "I sold my hair to buy my first guitar. Two hundred dollars!"

Turns out she wouldn't need the ax—by 2005, she'd hooked up with beatmaker/MC Pedro D'Eyrot, 23, and DJ/producer Rodrigo Gorky, 26, in their hometown of Curitiba to record the genre-hopping tracks that caught the attention of globe-trotting DJ Diplo, who released their first EP on his Mad Decent label. Their debut full-length, *...With Lasers*, is out now on Domino. "In Brazil we have this joke that everything with the addition of lasers is better," Vello explains, sort of. "Like, a bottle of water with lasers: so much better."

As Bonde Do Role prepares to take their Brazilian mishmash worldwide, many pitfalls await. Homesickness. Exhaustion. Unagi. "In November 2005, Pedro had sushi and went to the hospital and had his appendix out. In November 2006, Gorky had sushi and went to the hospital and had his appendix out," says Vello. "I don't eat Japanese food, but if I do try it, I have to be sure it's not in November."

BY MELISSA GIANNINI  
PHOTOGRAPH BY TIM SOTER

## FAST FACTS

→ Sepultura drummer **Igor Cavalera's** three kids—ages three, five, and eight—sing on "Geléia de Amendoim" ("Peanut Butter and Jelly"), the B-side to third single "Gasolina."

→ Gorky's mom does **water aerobics** to *...With Lasers*. "She took the CD to the teacher and said, 'Oh, can you please play my son's band?'"

ON VELLO: GUESS BY MARCIANO T-SHIRT, \$34; GUESS.COM; NODIA WATCH, \$125; NODIA.COM; ON GORKY: UNIC NOODIE, \$75; BURTON.COM; QUICKSILVER LIMITED T-SHIRT, \$60; QUICKSILVER.COM; BURTON CAP, \$25; BURTON.COM.

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# Rock Star!

***They used to be about flash and bravado. When did***

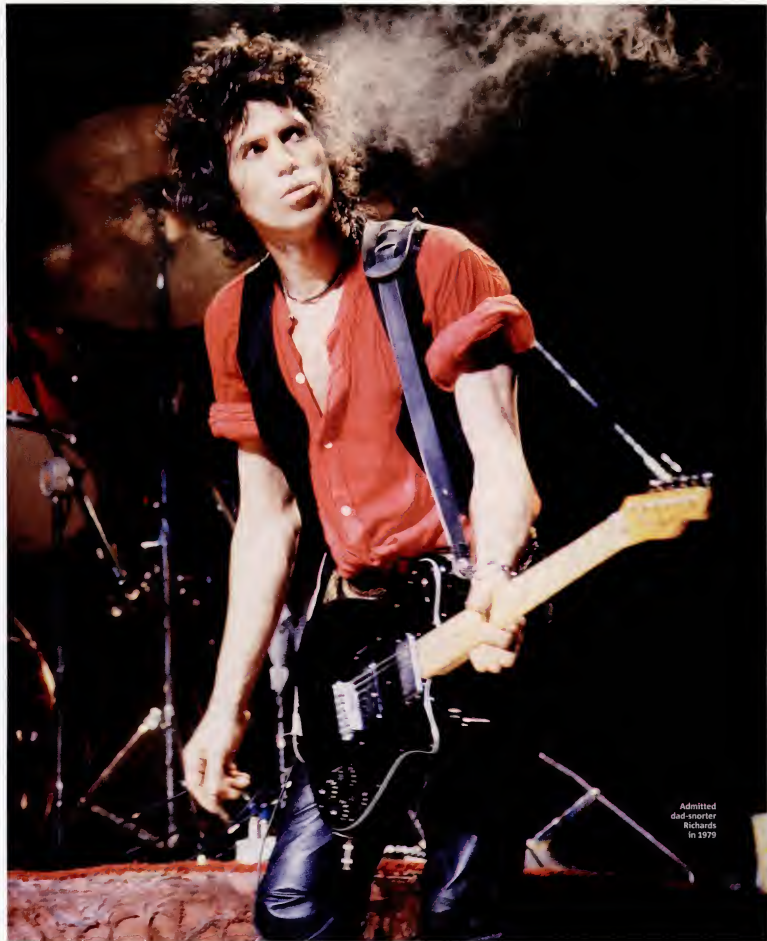


# ***Rock Star?***

***rockers start looking and acting like everyone else?***

***By David Browne***

CHRIS DAUNTRY



Admitted  
dad-snorter  
Richards  
in 1979

# Heard any good rock-star stories lately?

**Any outrageous anecdotes of living-large lunacy that only someone with platinum albums and a penchant for twisted kicks could inspire? Butch Walker has. As either a producer or a songwriter, he has put his prints all over records by Fall Out Boy, Pink, Avril Lavigne, the Donnas, the Academy Is, as well as the upcoming Van Bondies and Hot Hot Heat albums. And according to him, no one can top Tommy Lee when it comes to tales of rock 'n' roll excess. Just listen:**

"We're in the studio last year, working on a record, and Tommy comes in and he's pouring drinks. And he's like, 'Dude, Nine Inch Nails are playing at fuckin' Irvine Meadows! We gotta go! It'll be rad!' And I'm like, 'Dude, we're in Silver Lake. It's five o'clock traffic on a Friday—we'll be there by midnight if we leave now!'"

"He's like, 'I'm gonna call my friend who has a helicopter!' So we get on our bikes and ride through the Hollywood Hills. We get to his house and there's all these cop helicopters circling in the distance, about a mile away. We get in Tommy's car and he's like, 'We gotta hurry! The cops are trying to get my guy because he parked in Slash's driveway!' And I'm like, 'You can't park a helicopter in the Hollywood Hills, in a driveway!'"

"Tommy is completely unfazed by this. So we take off up the hill. We get to Slash's, and there are, like, eight cop cars, and they want to write the pilot a ticket. So of course Tommy gets out, turns on the charm, and seconds later, the cops are getting their pictures taken with him. We get in the helicopter, take off out of the hills, and we go right through downtown L.A., skimming over all the buildings and the traffic. We get to Irvine in 20 minutes and park in the field right next to the concert. We walk in—of course Tommy knows everybody. After the concert, we take our drinks and get back in the helicopter and cruise back through downtown L.A., and the pilot starts bobbing and weaving through all the buildings, doing figure eights. We're like ten feet away from the buildings—it's crazy. Tommy's like, 'Woo-hoo!'"

"We finally end up in the Hills, and the pilot's going, 'Okay, you're going to have to help me find Slash's house—all the lights are out.' So we're sitting there hovering above the Hollywood Hills, brushing the tops of trees of these mansions, debris flying everywhere, looking for Slash's driveway! Everything looks the same; everything's got a pool and a driveway. Tommy is drinking and high-fiving. But we find Slash's house, and we land in the driveway and get in Tommy's truck and go to his bar down the street and get the pilot fucked up until six in the morning. We come back and it's daylight. Slash's wife doesn't know why there's a helicopter in the driveway, so the whole helicopter was toilet papered."

As Walker relays it, the story is absurd, hilarious, and exactly what one would expect from the most extroverted member of Mötley Crüe. (And in case you were wondering, the pilot did get arrested and was fined for, among other things, landing a helicopter on a public road.) "Tommy's the consummate example of a rock star," Walker says. "That's not my version of one, but I'll be damned if it's not the most fun thing in the world to witness."

**N**ow, stop laughing—whether with Lee or at him—and think about this for a minute. Sure, Keith Richards, no stranger to envelope-pushing behavior, told a reporter in April that he'd snorted cocaine mixed with the ashes of his dad (a statement his manager later dismissed as a joke). But that remark aside, Walker's story brings up vital questions, like: Will we ever hear anything remotely similar emerge from the mouths of any of the hard rockers currently crowding the charts, whether it's Chris Daughtry or Nickelback or Three Days Grace?

Or better yet, what ever happened to...rock stars?

Successful rock musicians exist, sure. But that's not what we're talking about. A rock star isn't merely someone who sells a ton of albums or draws people into arenas. It's someone who can tear up both a stage and a mansion, someone whose music and wardrobe have an instantly indefinable style, someone who's funny and enjoying the ride. Someone you actually would recognize on the street.

Lately, that type of rock star has been in short supply. Seemingly overnight, we find ourselves in an era in which rockers seem woefully generic, as if they've all gone under the knife to have their charisma surgically removed. Sure, Gerard Way of My Chemical Romance is trying his damndest to take emo to theatrically glummy new heights, and Jack White's scraggly looks and spiffy duds bring to mind any number of vintage rock heroes. Hinder, Buckcherry, and Avenged Sevenfold are working hard to conjure the spirit of Sunset Strip sleaze. But they're the exceptions. If a member of, say, Blue October (one million albums sold) was reading this magazine over your shoulder on a bus, you probably wouldn't even know it. The only people who seem interested in going over the top—and loving it—are the walking cartoons who have competed on those tacky game shows *Rock Star: INXS* and *Rock Star: Supernova*. It's one thing to tire of hearing about rock high-life clichés, but is the antidote a bunch of scrubbed-clean pop punkers who equate edginess with dating teen starlets? "A lot of these new bands, they're not into it," says Hinder lead singer Austin Winkler. "It's a job. They do their thing and go back to the tour bus and play PlayStation."

Anonymous rockers are, of course, nothing new. Think back to the early '80s heyday of Styx, Foreigner, REO Speedwagon, and Journey. Plenty of the new-wave bands that followed were pretty interchangeable, too: Could anyone distinguish a Vapor from a Fabulous Poodle? When they showed up backstage at their Lollapalooza gigs in 1995, the members of Pavement were stopped by security guards who didn't believe they were actually musicians. And let's not even get started on the late '90s, when it became virtually impossible to distinguish among Vertical Horizon, Sister Hazel, Eve 6, and countless other post-grunge leftovers.

But something about the current scenario feels different. As similar as Journey and Styx may have sounded, it was still possible to take a close look and tell which guy was Steve Perry and which one was Dennis DeYoung, both physically and vocally. Now bands without a single genuine face attached to them—say, Snow Patrol, the Fray, or Guster—sell out major venues. Rock stars don't have to be party-till-you-puke animals—professionalism has its merits, too—but could it hurt for some of the new breed to have personality? In 2006, fans seeking good oldfangled showmanship onstage paid a premium to see the Rolling Stones, the Who, Aerosmith, or the



## ROCK STAR! ROCK STAR?

reunited Mötley Crüe, all of whom ranked among the top 20 highest-grossing tours of last year. The newest bands on the list—Nickelback and Coldplay—are hardly known for their dynamic stage presence. No wonder Poison and Rage Against the Machine have returned. When you see them, you'll remember the hits and the mugs.

Matt Pinfield, the former MTV VJ and current Sirius satellite radio host, recalls the last time he witnessed an outrageous rock-star moment—and it was seven years ago. Making the rounds at a party at the Playboy Mansion, he stumbled upon two men getting intimate with two Asian Bunnies. After his initial embarrassment wore off, Pinfield recognized the men, drummers for notoriously hard-partying L.A. bands. (No, he won't say who they were, at least not on the record.) Without missing a beat, each looked up and said, "Hey, Matt! How ya doin'?" before getting back to business.

"It was great," Pinfield rasps, a nostalgic pang evident in his voice. The following year, Pinfield went to work as an A&R scout for Columbia Records, where, among his other tasks, he hoped to discover the next big arena act. Yet he found few prospects. "There weren't a ton of new young kids coming through the door where I said, 'Now, he's going to be a star,'" he says with a sigh. "It's a lot different now."

Today, everyone seems to be acting like rock stars: athletes, rappers, tabloid queens, Sawyer on *Lost*. Everyone, that is, except rockers themselves. "We're the biggest band in the world, and no one knows who we are," Arcade Fire's Win Butler has said, according to a widely circulated letter from their manager defending the band against charges of overexposure. Good for them, but is this something to aspire to? What happened? Did we all overdose on too many episodes of *Behind the Music*?

**B**ret Michaels is still proud of his band's *Behind the Music*. "I laugh when I look back on it," the frontman for '80s poodle rockers Poison says. "I think, 'Dated a supermodel.' Check. 'Dated an actress—Pamela [Anderson].' Check. 'Did drugs and alcohol.' Check. 'Fast-car wrecks.' Check. 'Motorcycle wreck.' Check. When I got done watching it, I thought, 'Fuck—that rocked.'"



### "SLASH'S WIFE DOESN'T KNOW WHY THERE'S A HELICOPTER IN HER DRIVEWAY."

Butch Walker

For Michaels, seemingly oblivious to the notion that he risked other people's lives in the process, the solution is simple, dude: "We need rockers to step back up to the fucking plate and say, 'I rock. I'm cool.' Stop being faceless. If your neighbor is more exciting than a rock star, why not just go and hang out at your neighbor's house?"

As a journalist, I've heard plenty of rock-star stories myself over the years. There was the member of Nine Inch Nails who preferred his groupies to dress like French maids. The British legend who decided to

clean up and hired a bodyguard to keep drugs away from him—and then, bored with that scenario, hired someone else to get drugs past the bodyguard. The stripper backstage at the Black Crowes show. When I went on tour with Kiss in 1996, their roadies filled me in on "pussy passes," which the crew used to entice women to follow them behind the barricades, even if the ladies rarely, if ever, met the band.

"All of a sudden one day, rock went dull," says Michaels. "It's like they dimmed the lights all the way down. The record labels turned their backs. So did the video stations. If it weren't for Kid Rock, I was starting to think rock hadn't just dimmed; it may have actually died. He had some balls, and I actually knew what he looked like." The same, he says, can't be said of the garage revivalists from earlier this decade: "I know about Jet and the Vines and the Strokes, but I still can't completely identify all of them."

What happened? For one thing, Michaels (and just about everyone else interviewed for this article) blames the ghost of Kurt Cobain. Cobain was both an anti-star and a certifiable star, yet a watered-down version of his sound and image still lingers over the landscape. "His depression was real," Michaels says. "But that depression led a lot of bands to where we are today. They're faking their depression. Rock'n'roll is part fantasy and part reality. And a lot of bands today have lost that. They're allowed to come out onstage and be energetic, but it's considered uncool if you act like you're having a good time."

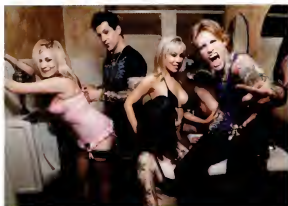
As jarring as it may be to look to a member of Poison for deep thoughts, Michaels does have a point. In retrospect, it feels as if the early '90s—a period that gave us not only Cobain, but also made icons out of Scott Weiland, Chris Cornell, and Eddie Vedder—may have been the last stand of the rock star as we know him. Each knew how to work it, even if he claimed he wasn't working it. The rise of the boy bands was one nail in the coffin—even at an early age, Justin Timberlake had better stage chops and more star power than his lunkheaded contemporary Fred Durst. These days, it's women like Amy Winehouse, Lily Allen, and Lady Sovereign who are exhibiting more rock-star personality and badassitude than the men are. John Mayer, guitar hero? Please.

The decline of the CD and the rise of the single may be a factor, too—rock has been so inextricably

## Pop Quiz: Rock Star or Bartender?

Five of these faces front some of today's biggest-selling rock acts. The other two mix a swell screwdriver. Can you tell who's who?





**Girls, girls, girls** (clockwise from top left): Motley crews Buckcherry, Avenged Sevenfold, and Hinder are trying to keep the Sunset Strip sleaze-rock flame alight.



linked with full-length albums that the genre now feels as diminished as the format. A few years ago, the Darkness were touted as a throwback to old-wave theatrics and sonics, but few could tell if they were being earnest or ironic (*Should that even matter?* the band asked). They fizzled after releasing their sophomore album—casualties, it must be noted, of traditional rock-star overindulgence. In the MySpace era, “kids want to feel more in contact with bands and be on their same level,” says Pinfield, thereby subverting the idea of “stars.” Deals struck between rock bands and corporations—not just tour sponsorships, but other routes for financial survival—can’t be helping: Who wants to see a lucrative chance to place a song in a commercial or on an episode of *Grey’s Anatomy* fall through because of naughty behavior?

But the rise of rap truly signaled the death of one kind of rock star and the birth of another. Just when rock stars began to bland out, hip-hop happily rose to the occasion: The biggest “rock” stars of this decade arguably have been Eminem and 50 Cent. These days, anyone in search of living-large wildness will find it in the rap world, where stars routinely get arrested and flaunt their status and money onstage and in bling-filled songs and videos. “Right now,” says Butch Walker, “rap is at the same place where rock’n’roll was when it became excessive in the late ‘80s—when Poison, Bon Jovi, and all those bands had those videos—all bling and not a lot of substance lyrically or musically. Band names in the ‘80s had all these

z’s and x’s, and it’s the same in hip-hop now. Every hip-hop guy is called Bonzazz with three z’s.”

Walker himself hasn’t exactly helped matters; he did, after all, produce the *Rock Star: Supernova* album, although he makes no artistic claims for it and says he did it to work with his “bros” Tommy Lee and Gilby Clarke. But mention Nickleback and Chris Daughtry, and Walker—who started his career with late-’80s hair farmers SouthGang, before forming the glam-pop *Marvelous 3* in the late ‘90s—practically snorts up the Starbucks he’s swigging. “It’s fucking disastrous. That’s ‘Just add water, make rock star.’ Which is not, to me, a rock star. That’s a *drink*.”

**O**nstage at Irving Plaza in New York City, Walker and his band are doing their best to rock like back in the day. Tall and lanky, and with long, jet-black hair, he has the look down, plus the sound: He’s playing songs from *The Rise and Fall of Butch Walker* and the *Let’s Go Out-Tonites!*, a semi-concept album about a rock star that was partly inspired by David Bowie’s *Ziggy Stardust*. Like someone who’s studiously examined YouTube clips of Cheap Trick and Eddie Van Halen in concert, he flips a guitar pick in the air and catches it midsong, plays a guitar with two necks, and slowly scrapes his strings across the mic stand to create an unholy *craaaaag*.

Yet, despite the Walker loyalists who’ve packed the club, he’s waging an uphill battle. His album has sold only 18,000 copies since it was released last year, more proof that anyone looking to reinject traditional

rock values into the culture is up against insurmountable odds. Even with a boost from television, the *Rock Star: Supernova* album flopped. For future kicks, we’ll probably have to turn to Michaels’ upcoming VH1 reality show, *Rock of Love With Bret Michaels*, an apparent knockoff of Flavor Flav’s smash *Flavor of Love*. “I’m surrounded by hot women and figuring out which one will fit in my lifestyle,” Michaels sums up. One episode, he adds, focuses on “one of the most outrageous parties you will see on TV. After my show in Vegas, I had four beautiful women. One of ‘em, I’m holding her head out of the toilet while she’s puking and telling me she loves me. The other one goes to the tattoo parlor that night and gets my name tattooed on the back of her neck. They came to the show, they rocked, they got hammered.”

Backstage at Irving Plaza, there’s a lone bottle of Bacardi, another of vodka, and enough water bottles to supply the New York City Marathon. Also in attendance is Shana, a massage therapist who has been working her magic fingers on Walker and his band. Shana spends most of her time as the in-house masseuse at a big Long Island concert hall, and in the course of servicing many pop-star backs and necks, she’s seen her share of action—like the night the G-Unit squad performed.

“It was backstage and all of a sudden I heard explosions, and I ducked down,” she recalls. “And it was pyro. I looked out, and there were bombs and lights. It was like a rock show!”

Did she also see and work on, say, Nickleback? “I think so,” she says. She pauses, scrunching up her face. “I’m not sure. What do they look like?” ☘



**MORE AT SPIN.COM** Watch rockers tell their favorite rock-star stories at [www.spin.com/rodstar](http://www.spin.com/rodstar)

Marilyn Manson, photographed  
for *Spin* in Santa Monica,  
California, April 5, 2007

Dior Homme by Hedi Slimane  
jacket-capt. \$5,825, Barneys  
New York, L.A. Resurrection  
shirt, Resurrection, L.A. Vivienne  
Westwood ring and Julien ring,  
White Trash Charms, L.A.



# RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD

AFTER A BREAKUP LEFT HIM "COMPLETELY DESTROYED,"  
MARILYN MANSON STRIKES BACK WITH A  
NEW (VERY YOUNG) MUSE, AN INTENSELY PERSONAL  
ALBUM, AND A DISTASTE FOR CROTCH PANELS.  
JONATHAN AMES JOURNEYS INTO HIS ART OF DARKNESS.

Photographs by Richard Burbridge









Spreading his religion:  
Manson performs at  
the Vatican... sorry,  
Ozfest in 1997.

AFTER ABOUT TWO HOURS of drinking and talking, Manson wants to play *Eat Me, Drink Me*. "This album was borne out of depression," he says. "But it's also about cannibalism in a romantic sense, the idea of wanting someone so bad you want to devour them."

Before the album started coming together, though, he couldn't make any art for months; his misery over his failing marriage was consuming him. "I was completely destroyed," he says. "I had no soul left. I define myself as a person, a human, an artist, as someone who makes things—writing, painting, music—and I couldn't do anything."

One day he was telling his guitarist and coproducer, Tim Skold, about his heartbreak, and Skold said, simply, "Why don't you write a song about it?" Manson was shocked by the suggestion but followed the advice. "It's strange, but it never occurred to me to work that way," he says. "I've never laid myself out there like I have in these songs."

He puts the CD into the stereo, and it's beautiful and devastating. Reading the lyrics as I listen, I think of the album as the love child of Von Teese and Wood, equal parts despair and joy. It mourns the loss of Von Teese and celebrates Wood's embrace. I occasionally look up from the lyrics, sneaking peeks at him. His eyes are closed and the long, thin fingers of his left hand touch his pale temple. At one point, I nearly start crying—the music and the absinthe are working on me, and I'm thinking of all my breakups, all that lost love. Then the album is over and Manson says, "You look like you were moved." I realize that he's been sneaking peeks at me as well.

Arvin, as he has throughout the night, comes in and refills our glasses while Manson is telling me how all his previous records had been fueled by nihilism and rage at the world, but then, he says, "I became so deeply depressed, which is different from being nihilistic. You have nothing to live for. For the first time, I lost hope."

For the first time? I think. I'm shocked by this. I haven't had any hope in years. Manson goes on to tell me that he's more or less back to his old, strong nihilistic self. But all of this disturbs me. Am I darker than Marilyn Manson?

I express to him that being a nihilist is a form of idealism—you don't want to tear things down if you don't think things could be better somehow—and he agrees. But I've never thought that way. I'm a despairist. I don't get angry at the world; I go straight to sadness. I sometimes secretly hope that man can change, but mostly, I've given up.

I'm rather inebriated and don't want to think that Manson is delusional. So I say to him, feeling slightly hysterical, "Do you really think, as a nihilist, you can change things? Change the world?"

He sips his absinthe and says, calmly, "No. I can't change anything." He goes on to talk about Wood's role in *Across the Universe*, Julie Taymor's upcoming impressionistic film featuring Beatles songs, and he mentions the title song's famous refrain: "Nothing's gonna change my world." I tell him that I know that song well—an old girlfriend put it on a breakup mix tape, and I've wept to it many times.

Manson then tells me he referenced the lyric in his song "Lamb of God" (from his *Holy Wood* album), about the death of John Lennon, changing it to: "Nothing's going to change the world."

I find all of this is very soothing and reassuring. Manson is not delusional, and I feel less alone. We're of the same mind: There's nothing to be done.

AROUND 2:30 A.M., we head for the kitchen to get more absinthe. It's my first time in the main part of the house. We walk down the hallway and the white cat, like Alice's white rabbit, is gone.

In the kitchen, Arvin is putting out some food for Manson—a steak and salad. Looking at the food, Manson says, "I have a weight complex. I want to stay skinny, so I try to eat little. I try to come right up to the edge between healthy and not healthy." He sips his absinthe. "You have to get your body to the point where germs are afraid to live."

He pours me some blue absinthe—absinthe, apparently, comes in different colors—and he tells me that a German distillery is developing a brand just for Manson.

Absinthe, due to its high alcohol content, is not sold in the U.S. Also, it contains wormwood, which is thought to cause mild hallucinations—and I have noticed, as the night has worn on, that all sources of light seem to sparkle. Manson tells me he drinks the stuff because it doesn't fatigue him, and because the long history of artists—such as Poe, Rimbaud, and Van Gogh—favoring absinthe appeals to him.

We leave the kitchen and walk about the house, which was once owned, he informs me, by the actress Barbara Stanwyck. The place is pretty much devoid of furniture. I do spot one chair. Sitting in it is a human skeleton with an animal head.



With Dita Von Teese in 2003



With Evan Rachel Wood in April

## "THIS ALBUM'S ABOUT WANTING SOMEONE SO BAD YOU WANT TO DEVOUR THEM."

We go into Manson's music studio, which is littered with equipment and looks like the lair of a mad scientist. We also visit his painting studio. In the middle of the room is a 19th-century embalming table that is permanently marked by the brownish stains of dead bodies.

"I thought I might make love on it," Manson says.

Instead, he recently decided to paint a portrait of Jesus on the table. Manson wanted the death stains to come through the face of Jesus, as a sort of homage to the Shroud of Turin.

As I admire his work, he tells me about the art gallery he opened in Hollywood, the Celebritarian Corporation. The address is 667 Melrose Avenue. "That wasn't intentional," he says. "My neighbor is a church. They might be 666."

We step outside, and there is a pool in which William Holden could have floated very nicely. Staring through the trees, I can see the lights of the nearby homes. "If I was a kid in this neighborhood, I would definitely bug Marilyn Manson," he says. "That's why I get up on the roof with my pellet gun sometimes, paranoid that there are intruders."

We go back inside and Manson says, "Arvin will drive you home. You're very drunk. We don't want you to be killed."

"Thank you," I say.

### A PHONE CONVERSATION, MARCH 26, 2007

JONATHAN: Hi, Marilyn.

MANSON: Hey, you got me really drunk last night. That never happens. I was trying to keep up with you.

JONATHAN: I'm sorry. I realize I just called you Marilyn. Is that all right?

MANSON: Anyone who's close to me calls me Manson. Strangely, I've never felt comfortable introducing myself with a woman's name. For me, the name works only in its entirety. For brevity's sake, it became easier to call me Manson. Early on, they called me M, but then Eminem sort of stigmatized that. He actually said—and we know each other and get along famously—when he was first starting out that he wanted to be the rap Marilyn Manson. He asked me to sing on his first record, and I would have, except that the song he asked to me sing was—and this might sound strange—too misogynistic. It was the one about killing his girlfriend and putting her in a trunk. It was on a record I could listen to, but it was too over-the-top for me to associate with. It didn't represent where I was at. First of all, I don't drive. And I wouldn't put a girl in a trunk; that's where I keep other stuff. That's my dry, deadpan humor kicking in.

JONATHAN: What about Trent Reznor? What's the status of your relationship?

MANSON: I don't really have an answer for that. A while ago, I saw he said something derogatory about me in the press, and I called him up and said, "Why should we fight?" I have no hard feelings. He has my former bass player playing for him; that's



Gallery of the grotesque (clockwise from left): At a 1999 awards show; one of Manson's paintings; a 1994 mug shot; his first Spin cover, 1998

## "I GET UP ON MY ROOF WITH A PELLET GUN SOMETIMES."

the only thing we have in common. He may be very muscular right now, but I'm a much more dangerous person.

**JONATHAN:** What are your sexual fetishes?

**MANSON:** First and foremost: women's stockings. Stockings are such a fetish for me. I still wear them onstage. I particularly like translucent ones or skin-tone. I associate them with my eighth-grade Bible teacher. But she was probably wearing pantyhose with a crotch panel. I also like women's feet. If I see a woman with ugly feet, I get angry. And I like looking at women's shoes in a store, imagining them on a girl.

**JONATHAN:** I once read this great thing about a shoe fetishist in Kraft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*. The guy was more in love with his wife's shoes than with his wife, and he couldn't perform in bed with her. So Kraft-Ebing or some other doctor told him to nail a shoe over their conjugal bed and to look at the shoe while he made love to his wife, and maybe then he would be able to perform. I always like thinking of that shoe nailed over the bed.

**MANSON:** Yeah, if I was a psychiatrist, that's the kind of thing I would prescribe. That's the kind of doctor I would be!

**JONATHAN:** Are you close to your parents? I couldn't believe it when I read in your memoir that your dad would say to your friends, "Have you ever sucked a dick sweeter than mine?"

**MANSON:** Yeah, that's my dad. He's still potentially perverted. My parents are retired. My mom is going through a rough period. I support them. I'm closer to them now.

**JONATHAN:** You're a good son.

THE FOLLOWING EVENING, I'm performing at a club in Hollywood called Largo. I'm a writer, but sometimes I do comedy. My friend Fiona Apple has come to see me and provide support, and thinking of all the weird connections, I recall that Fiona once covered "Across the Universe." Manson shows up with Evan Rachel Wood and sits with us. Fiona and Manson have met before, years ago, and are happy to see one another.

Manson is wearing a fedora and offers me a hit from his flask of absinthe. Having to perform, I decline. Wood is much more beautiful in person than in the photos I've seen. She looks like a young Grace Kelly.

Aimee Mann starts the show with a few songs, and then the comedian Patton Oswalt takes the stage, followed by me. I tell a number of stories and do an extended monologue on how in high school, after reading a letter in *Penthouse* magazine describing such an action, I put a hairbrush up my ass, producing a violent orgasm. When I get offstage, Manson hugs me and says, "I'm your number one fan! I also had a hairbrush put up my ass once!"

Afterward, Manson tells Mann how much he admires her music and her role in *The Big Lebowski*, a film he worships. Then a bunch of us go to Bar Marmont, where Manson has secured a VIP table.

Fiona doesn't like the scene and takes to drawing elaborate faces in a journal. The bar, I observe, is filled with Paris Hilton knockoffs, like fake Rolexes. It occurs to me that Hilton is a knockoff of some sort. I think of Manson's song "The Beautiful People."

Manson's friend Stanton LaVey, the grandson of Anton LaVey, joins our party and tells me, "Manson is the most revered Satanist, second only to my grandfather." Dave Navarro comes over to shake Manson's hand.

I ask Wood what her fetishes are. She looks adoringly at Manson and says, "Boys in eye makeup are the greatest thing ever—that whole androgynous thing." The two of them are madly in love. They are beauty and the beast, like Manson's name personified. Wood used to be in a TV show called *American Gothic*, and now she's really living it. About her attraction to androgyny, she explains: "I've been obsessed with David Bowie since I was five—that's what started it."

"We have so many mutual obsessions," says Manson, also an enormous Bowie fan. Then he tells her, "Show him your tattoo."

Wood pulls back her skirt, and on her upper thigh, right next to her adorable red panties, is a black heart with a lightning bolt inside. "The black heart is for me," says Manson, "and the lightning bolt is for Bowie." He shows me a black heart he had tattooed on his inner wrist as an expression of his love for her.

I then have this poetic thought that if Bowie was the man who fell to earth, then Manson is his dark mirror—the man who came out of the earth, the suburban child of Middle America, vomited out by his Christian-school upbringing, the child of a Vietnam vet. Manson and his father used to go to a support group for families affected by Agent Orange. You don't get more grotesquely American than that. You don't get more American than Marilyn Manson.

My thoughts are interrupted when a short, squat man approaches Manson and says, "Hi, Brian." He shakes Manson's hand and walks away. I realize that it's Lars Ulrich, the drummer for Metallica. It's like Manson is the Godfather—people keep coming over to pay their respects, including other rock stars. He says to me, "Whenever someone wants to act like they really know me, they call me Brian. But not even the people I sodomize—and I'm not saying I sodomize Evan—call me Brian."

Then he beckons me to come with him to the bathroom. Arvin materializes, follows us, and stands guard.

"Want to do drugs?" Manson asks.

"What kind of drugs?" I whine, scared.

"You know what kind of drugs I do," he says, and I think of his runny nose two nights before.

"I have a flight in the morning," I whimper.

"Come on," he says. "It's rock'n'roll."

I look at Arvin and then follow Manson into the toilet.

A FEW HOURS LATER, the sun is up and I pull into a gas station on my way to the airport. As I pay for the gas at the register, I see that amid the display of magazines is a copy of *Penthouse* with Dita Von Teese on the cover. The coverline reads: SEE WHAT MANSON'S MISSING. This is too strange. I buy *Penthouse* for the first time in probably 25 years, but I feel a little embarrassed and try to explain my purchase to the cashier, "I know him. Marilyn Manson."

"Really?" the cashier responds.

I get in my car and open the magazine. Von Teese is certainly very beautiful. Then I go to the letters section, wondering if there will be any more coincidences, but I don't see, much to my disappointment, a single letter about hairbrushes going up anyone's ass. ☹



MORE AT SPIN.COM For an exclusive behind-the-scenes video interview with Marilyn Manson on the set of our photo shoot, log on to [www.spin.com/junecover](http://www.spin.com/junecover)



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"Help me, Obi-Wan  
Kenobi—you're  
my only hope."

Don't let the fact that she's hooked up with reigning hit-maker Timbaland fool you—**Björk** is still as challenging and inscrutable as ever. "I'm not trying to go mainstream," she says. "This is about music, not jumping on bandwagons."

BY PHOEBE REILLY

If Björk ever gets irritated by the frequency with which she's referred to as "elfin," she won't admit it. "How do I feel about being called adorable? I find it kind of ridiculous, but it doesn't upset me. That would be like taking the weather personally—I can't control it." Nor can she successfully conceal her preciousness during lunch in Manhattan. Wearing a hot-pink babydoll dress, her right elbow peeking out through a threadbare patch on the sleeve, she wiggles in her seat like a fidgety child, making it easy to forget that the 41-year-old multiplatinum singer is one of the most respected musicians in the world. And though she's at that age when even controversy-courting pop stars like Madonna are anxious to reveal their boring, domestic sides, Björk remains unapologetically eccentric and even dangerous—she can throw you to the ground if you get in her way, like she did a Thai reporter in 1996. Björk is here to talk about *Volta*, an album that is just as genre-bending as the five that preceded it, but more aggressive. In fact, this collection of politicized, up-tempo, beat-heavy songs may be her least adorable yet.

**Why did you decide to work with Timbaland on this record?**

Because I really wanted visceral, physical, strong music. And he is definitely a guy who has headspace for a strong woman—like Missy Elliott. He lets her be who she is. It's not like she's there with huge tits, keeping her mouth shut and being sexy. When you go into the studio with him, it's like, "Drop everything and do it in the name of music."

**Did you want him to help make *Volta* more accessible than your previous album, *Medúlla*, which was essentially a cappella?**

I didn't contact him because I was desperate for a No. 1 hit—probably the contrary. I like his little quirky tracks that never become singles. Then he had quite a year with Justin Timberlake and Nelly Furtado, and then I started reading online that he's working with people like Coldplay. It worried me—"Is

he working with everybody?" Not that I was being possessive, but it was important for me that our little thing would be precious. I'm not trying to go mainstream. This is about music, not about jumping on bandwagons.

**As someone who takes risks with music, would it bother you if you were accused of jumping on a bandwagon?**

No. But I am very protective about my records. I don't want it to look like I just went shopping. What I'm most concerned about is that the collaboration comes from a genuine place. That it's organic. It's like if you started working someplace and you bump into somebody, and for some weird reason, you click, and before you know it, you're going to movies together. You can't control it. I'm quite old-fashioned that way. In music, I think you can hear it when things are just added together without any chemistry.

## I'm not crazy about rock. It's square-shaped and very much about not having mystery. I can't get into it.

**Then do you object to television shows like *American Idol* that commercialize and sensationalize the process of becoming a musician?**

I don't know. I don't have a TV. Not that I'm against television—I think it's great. It's just that I've got so many things to do that sorting out the TV thing is like number 47 on my list. But reality TV—I think it's a good thing.

**That's surprising. Why?**

I get annoyed much less by people in the street. Twenty years ago the idea of celebrity was somebody like me. It was assumed that if you got into the limelight, you were easy access, 24/7. It was sort of like being a heart surgeon and going to the cinema, and having people say, "Can I show you my heart?" You always had to say yes. But with reality shows and characters like Paris Hilton, it's becoming more complex. I happen to go onstage and I happen to sing, but that doesn't mean I want people to film me when I go to the bathroom. But some people do want that. Certain people want to be celebrities, and certain people will watch them. Reality shows wouldn't exist if there wasn't a need.

**Did your wariness of fame begin after a deranged fan sent you a mail bomb in 1996 and later killed himself?**

It was a combination of things. At that time, I had lived in England for three years, and I was an A-list celebrity there. It was me and five other people. It sounds really bigheaded, but it's just a fact. As a foreigner, I was kind of flattered. It was like I was being offered a role in their society: "Will you be the person we watch and look at?" But I didn't like it. I felt if I breathed in [*inhales deeply*], that 100,000

people were synchronizing their breathing with me. I don't think it's a coincidence that everybody leaves England: John Lennon, David Bowie, Becks and Posh. People can't handle it over there. So I said, "Thanks for the honor, but I'm not interested," and I moved to Spain for six months, made [*1997's*] *Homogenic*, and stepped out of the whole thing.

**You started recording and performing when you were 11. Did you ever have a moment when you almost broke down and shamed your head like Britney Spears?**

I definitely have sympathy for her, but I don't identify with her so much, because I had a choice. I could move away. And she can't. I mean, even though she can move to Hong Kong or Africa or whatever, she wouldn't escape it. And that's scary. It was scary to look at the headlines when she was photographed without her knickers. There were obviously hundreds

of paparazzi forced in her face, and the headline was ATTENTION-SEEKING BRITNEY. [*Pauses*] I'm embarrassed because this actually shows how much I've been following it!

**What's your least favorite trend in music?**

I'm not crazy about rock, but I've said that for a long, long time. My stepdad listens to rock, my brother listens to rock, my son listens to rock. It's a white, male thing for me. It's square-shaped and Christian. It's very much about not having mystery. I can't get into it.

**But you were once in a rock band.**

I was in a lot of bands, and several times I went through this thing where you start a band, do an album, and it gets labeled. My first was "pop-punk" and the next one was "experimental post-punk," and then you get stuck in that box. I was so determined when I was 17 and did my first solo record that that was one hole I wasn't going to fall into.

**Were there any hard feelings between you and the rest of the Sugarcubes when you left the band and made *Debut*?**

Not really. I mean, not compared to what you hear from other bands. When the Sugarcubes were formed, it was a joke. We got drunk and decided to start a pop band. We were actually surprised that it lasted as long as it did.

**Was it weird to reunite with the band last November?**

No, we've always been friends. When I am in Iceland, we meet on Tuesdays for lunch and soup. Bad Taste [*the Icelandic label that released the Sugarcubes'*

albums] was our baby, and it was on the verge of bankruptcy, so we decided to do this gig for free and put all the money into it.

**Volta sounds remarkably different from your last few albums, which are much quieter.**

I always try to be true to how I feel. I like my album to have the same mood as it was written in. Most of my favorite albums are introverted affairs, where it's not Friday night after four or five cocktails. It's more like when you are alone in your home reading a book. My last couple of albums were written in that sort of situation. But I have a natural cycle that I'm going through. It can't be summer all the time. You have to go through autumn and plant seeds and wait—and then it's out of your hands, and you become an extroverted person. I went through an extroverted period from 1993 to 1997, and this album is a bit like those [*albums*].

**By extroverted, do you mean that while recording *Debut* and *Post*, you did a lot of partying?**

I wasn't out clubbing every night. But I guess you could say I was more social.

**Ecstasy was such a big part of the electronic dance music scene. What was your attitude toward drugs at the time?**

I wasn't against it and I wasn't for it. It's not the point. When I was going to clubs in England in '88—before [*Ecstasy*] became a huge thing—it wasn't so much about drugs. You would stay up until 6 A.M., but you would forget to go to the bar and just be high on music. I'm very into getting high on nature and not with assistance.

**Iceland is a country where people drink heavily. Can you hold your liquor?**

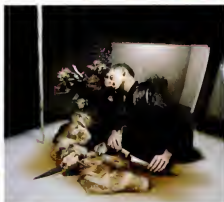
Yeah. I think it's a Nordic thing. People in cold countries tend to just go for it, but only on the weekends. When I was a teenager, you wouldn't drink in the middle of the week. You wouldn't have a glass of wine with your meal, because you'd be an alcoholic. But if you drank a liter of vodka on a Friday night, you were cool. It's more about having an out-of-body experience and getting into a trance and getting rid of everything on your back. Then you wake up the next morning, and you've left all the luggage behind.

**Your mother is so active in politics that she once went on a hunger strike to protect the Icelandic wilderness from a power plant. When you were young, did she ever try to enlist your help in her causes?**

She has, but she always put me off because she's so extreme. It's not realistic. It's just making it easier to ridicule. I was a bit of an anti-activist for a long time because of that.

**What about your new single, "Earth Intruders," which has a very martial feel? Was it intended as a commentary on the Iraq war?**

That was written on the airplane when I flew



## The Ice Queen

Clockwise from top left: Björk, circa age 12, clearly blushing from the attention; with daughter Isadora in 2005; with the Sugarcubes in 1988; sucking face with Barney in his 2005 film *Drawing Restraint 5*; getting the 2004 Olympics off to a weird start; clashing with a photographer in Thailand, 1996



back from Indonesia. I had been in the area of the tsunami, and I flew straight to a session with Timbaland. I was trying to sleep in this uncomfortable seat, and I had a dream about a tsunami of people—millions and millions of ill and poverty-stricken people without a home—flying across the Atlantic and marching over to the White House and putting things right, equalizing a little bit the power structure on this planet. The marching was the feet of all those people. It's pretty naive, but it was a dream. That's my excuse.

#### Would you be scared to record an album completely alone?

The majority of the beats on my records I do myself. Most people don't realize that. As an exception I will get a collaborator, but 90 percent of my albums are very solitary. I'm editing away on the computer alone. I love collaborations, because then I can drop the ego. I don't look at it as this neurotic clinging to others. I mean, everybody says about Prince, "Oh, he's so amazing; he plays all the instruments himself." I don't think of that as a virtue. I'm not dissing Prince—I think he's great—but the gorgeous thing about music is that it is such a great form of communication. That's something us humans are quite clumsy with a lot of the time.

#### Does the destructive potential of technology ever worry you?

I think it's just the way things are. I think bad things are going to happen because of it, but so will fantastic things, and we're going to edit out what we don't like. Like nuclear energy. We made mistakes with it, and we figured out it's not a good idea to bomb people, but maybe it's a good idea to give homes energy. We learn. It's nature.

#### What's the biggest misconception people have about you?

I don't know. I'm used to being misunderstood. It's not important for me to be understood. I think it's actually

## Hollywood's like a religion, and I had s--t on the church floor.



Playing a practical yolk at the Oscars, 2001

quite arrogant to expect people to understand you. Maybe there's a side of me that my friends know about that people don't see—the fact that I'm the oldest of my brothers and sisters, and I'm actually a pretty sensible person.

Do you think people have the impression that you are not a sensible person? After you wore that swan dress to the Oscars in 2001, a lot of people who'd never heard of you before just thought you were a kook.

I can't believe people are still talking about the swan dress six years later! It was a joke. I find Hollywood dress sense very alienating. Obviously, I was sticking my tongue out at it. One thing nobody mentions is that I had six eggs with me and I distributed them around the red carpet. And all the lifeguards for the stars were like, "Sorry, ma'am, you dropped this." It was hilarious. The weirdest thing is everybody actually thought I was trying to fit in but that I somehow got it wrong. Does it look like I am trying to fit in with you? No. I didn't realize how sacred Hollywood is. It's like a religion, and I had shit on the church floor.

Both you and your partner, Matthew Barney, are famous for being challenging, avant-garde artists. What is daily life at home like with him and your daughter, Isadora?

I think it's more regular than people think; let's just say that. There's definitely a lot of cooking happening. People are not going to believe it, I know, but I've always been a bit of a homebody. I had a child at the age of 20 [son, Sindri], and just when he was getting big, I got a new one. They're the best companions. I can't imagine anything better than having a conversation about giraffes and why they are not blue. ☺

## DISCOGRAPHY Björk



#### THE SUGARCUBES Life's Too Good ★★★

A bunch of alt-rock dudes from Iceland can't muzzle Björk Gudmundsdóttir: Her guttural vocals and rolled 'r's turn otherwise standard-issue songs ("Birthday," "Motorcrash") into distinctly infectious singles.



#### THE SUGARCUBES Stick Around for Joy ★★

Björk eventually confessed that the 'Cubes were "not her kind of music," which probably explains why their final album sounds like uninspired B-52's.



#### Debut ★★★

*ELEKTRA, 1993*  
Having ditched a band and a surname, 27-year-old Björk unleashes her eccentricity on Massive Attack producer Nellee Hooper. The oddball "Violently Happy" and "Human Behaviour" provide a respite from Seattle's prevailing angst-mongering.



#### Post ★★★★★

*ELEKTRA, 1995*  
Bursting with show-tune-grandeur ("It's Oh So Quiet") a mere three tracks after the grunting, NIN-channeling opener, "Army of Me," Björk defies predictability to achieve critical and platinum success.



#### Telegram ★★★

*ELEKTRA, 1997*  
An eagerness to have her music interpreted by a trendy gang of collaborators, including ex-boyfriend Tricky, led Björk to immediately reinvent Post as a remix album. A few songs are stripped of their charm, but others, like "Hyperballad," emerge new and improved.



#### Homogenic ★★★★★

*ELEKTRA, 1997*  
Turning her back on the hype, Björk flees to Spain to assemble her most sublime and vulnerable album yet. Homogenic peaks and trembles with

the precision of an EKG and is just as life-affirming, especially the chilling closer, "All Is Full of Love."



#### Selmasongs ★★★

*ELEKTRA, 2000*  
Like her doomed protagonist in the film *Dancer in the Dark*, Björk manages to belt out these clever, wide-eyed musical numbers in spite of personal peril (i.e., rumored on-set clashes with director Lars von Trier).



#### Vespertine ★★★★★

*ELEKTRA, 2001*  
Her fourth solo album proceeds with centripetal force, soaring upward on the dizzying ballads "Hidden Place" and "It's Not Up to You" before landing with minimal fanfare on Matmos productions like "Heirloom."



#### Medúlla ★★★

*ELEKTRA, 2004*  
On a capella tracks that will definitely not get stuck in your head, the pregnant singer—along with Mike Patton, Rahzel, and several choirs—discovers that the human voice is her fiercest instrument.



#### The Music From Drawing Restraint 9 ★★

*ONE LITTLE INDIAN, 2005*  
Even by Björk's standards, the score for the film by her partner, experimental artist Matthew Barney, is really weird—though perhaps totally appropriate for scenes of the singer bathing with lemons aboard a whaling ship. *JR.*

FOR A FULL REVIEW OF VOICES, SEE PAGE 90





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A YEAR  
AFTER  
THEIR  
HISTORIC  
DEBUT,  
ARCTIC  
MONKEYS  
ATTEMPT  
SOMETHING  
EVEN MORE  
HISTORIC:  
STICKING  
AROUND

BY STEVE  
KANDELL  
PHOTOGRAPH BY  
MICHAEL  
GREENBERG





HOW TO  
SUDDENLY  
BECOME

# THE BIGGEST BAND EVER

FOR A LITTLE WHILE,  
THEN JUST AS  
SUDDENLY  
NOT BE,  
WITHOUT  
LOSING YOUR  
BLOODY  
MIND

Jamie Cook, Alex  
Turner, Matt Helders,  
and Nick O'Malley,  
photographed for  
*Spin* in New York City,  
February 21, 2007

# MEMORIZE THE RULES...THEN IGNORE THEM

So pervasive is the idea that the kids today—with their PlayStations and their MySpaces and their anesthetization to and impatience for complex thought—are such lost-cause dots, any evidence to the contrary proves electrifying. Geezers breathe a sigh of relief that all hope may not be lost for society, while the youth, empowered, emerge from their fractious subcultures to rally around a common, timeless cause: Parents just don't understand. This may in part explain the events of January 29, 2006.

That was the day the world learned that Arctic Monkeys' *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* had become the fastest-selling debut in British history, moving 363,735 copies in its first week of release. Four whip-smart kids from a suburb of Sheffield, barely out of their teens, had managed to eclipse Oasis and the freakin' Beatles, due not to a calculated marketing plan, but thanks to old-fashioned/newfangled word of mouth, while the gob-smacked industry sat on the sidelines, furiously taking notes. Arctic Monkeys' songs infused rock's most trod-upon lyrical terrain—bored teens up to no good—with such detail and wit it was as though no one had ever written about going dancing before. Music fans young and old, casual and committed, embraced in the streets, marveling that something so literate and genuine and organic could make itself heard above the din.

Then came January 30. The next stage was so inevitable the band went on to sing about it themselves, gleefully, on last April's EP, *Who the Fuck Are Arctic Monkeys?*, beating everyone else to the punch: "Bring on the backlash!"

"It sort of keeps you on your toes a bit, if you know they're waiting to crucify you," guitarist Jamie Cook says in a porridge-thick accent, sipping coffee with singer/guitarist Alex Turner, drummer Matt Helders, and bassist Nick O'Malley in a swanky pub in Manhattan's West Village on a frigid afternoon. (O'Malley is the one who looks like he could, if commanded to, actually grow facial hair.)

"What's the worst that can happen?" shrugs soft-spoken but razor-tongued Turner. "Someone says, 'I didn't like that tune as much as I liked that other one.'"

Arctic Monkeys have done their part to further upset the natural order of things by releasing a sure-footed second album, *Favourite Worst Nightmare*, barely a

year after their debut (which sold a decent but non-Beatlemaniacal 300,000 copies Stateside—a quarter of its eventual U.K. tally), rather than adhering to the seemingly standard three-year cycle. And though the new album overall is more aggressive and maybe less catchy, judging from the opening assault, "Brianstorm," and the nimble wordplay of "D Is for Dangerous," there's little chance fans won't like these tunes as much. The songs are less provincial, naturally, yet they avoid the we're-bloated-rock-stars-now pitfalls, or as O'Malley says, songs about "scoping bitches from your Escalade."

"I think the first record really represented that time, and people were begging for it," Turner recalls. "We were talking about our lives in a way that, I suppose, was well executed, and there was nothing else like it. We nailed it. But we got into this to make records, and we just wanted to get on with it. We've only got so much time."

"I think it's good we have to prove ourselves a bit more here," adds Cook. "The British press builds bands up, and a lot of them aren't shit. You have to go about and prove your character."

The script says Arctic Monkeys will disappear as quickly as they came, squandering their goodwill with embarrassing tabloid exploits and undercooked attempts to overstay their welcome. ("What happened before, it can't happen to us again," Cook says, visibly relieved.) But judging from how these four childhood friends (all of whom are 21) treat their extraordinary circumstances with ordinary nonchalance, the script is not likely to be followed. They are proving their character every day. Which begs the question: Who the fuck are Arctic Monkeys?



Live at the Forum in London, August 24, 2006



COR BLIMEY!

## The Most Englishest Bands Ever

### ←The Bonzo Dog Band

**WHO:** Playing swing-era jazz and rock, these '60s dadaists skewered Englishness in songs like "Hunting Tigers out in India." Neil Innes went on to form the Beatles-spoofing Rutles. **COME AGAIN?** "I'm a wobbly jelly, you're a pink blancmange / I'm a sherry trifle, you're a chocolate sponge" (from "My Pink Half of the Drampipe")

### Carter the Unstoppable Sex Machine

**WHO:** Antic, politically minded London duo that, despite all the obscure slang and in-jokes, managed to get a few records released Stateside in the early '90s. **COME AGAIN?** "We've got yardies, steamers, parasitic cops / Boskik boys playing chicken in the box" (from "24 Minutes From Tulse Hill")

### Cockney Rejects

**WHO:** Loud and proud of their working-class world, this '80s London quartet blurred the line between punk rock and soccer hooliganism—and take credit for naming the shouty subgenre Oi. **COME AGAIN?** "Oily rag spam / How yer goin' me ol' china / Well in order mate, innit? / We're firm-handed, pal" (from "The Greatest Cockney Ripoff")

# COME FROM GOOD HOMES

Sheffield, England, is a former steel town that has spawned acts as varied as Def Leppard, the Human League, and Pulp. Twenty minutes north is High Green, a middle-class suburb that birthed Arctic Monkeys. Turner and Cook got guitars for Christmas in 2001 and learned to play them in Turner's garage with their childhood friend Helder and original bassist Andy Nicholson, who left the band just as Monkeyman started subsidizing last summer. ("There were certain aspects of it he didn't like, to the point where he had to get away" is all Turner will say about the departure.) During and after high school, they'd drive into Sheffield to clubs like the Leadmill, jumping up and down to the Strokes and the Libertines, paying careful attention not only to the music blaring from the PA, but also to the blokes and nutes jumping up and down around them. They made songs about that and put them on the Internet for free, and people flipped out. They released a proper single and it went to No. 1. When they were the fastest-selling debut act in British chart history, they were all living at home with their mums.

That Turner's father is a music teacher and his mother teaches German and linguistics makes it unsurprising that he was a quick study. "She's always been fascinated by language, and I suppose that rubbed off," he says of his ability to turn observations of a mispent youth very much still in progress into deft, rapid-fire lyrics. Quips like "All the weekend rock stars are in the toilet practicing their lines" and "Who wants to sleep in the city that never wakes up?" have made Turner's acerbic songwriting the center of the attention paid to his band. "That makes me feel a bit weird, like, 'Oh shit, maybe I'm not supposed to be doing it that way,'" he says.

Arctic Monkeys' success has come at a time when other U.K. bands such as Bloc Party, Kaiser Chiefs, and the Fratellis have taken off, thus accelerating the potential for consumer fatigue at home, as well as the potential for headline-grabbing mudslinging. But the smart acts aren't taking the bait. "Nowadays, kids in the schoolyards are learning to play guitar rather than how to do dance routines, and that's great, but it does flood the market," says Kaiser Chiefs singer Ricky Wilson. "Maybe at first you get a bit jealous [of the Monkeys' ascent], but then you remember there's always been more than one band in the world. Sure, I want to sell more records than them, but that doesn't mean you don't go for a beer at the end of the night."

More than a decade ago, British pop stars were far more polarized—in the national music press, anyway—by a supposed class war between blue-collar Oasis and well-heeled Blur, but no less a loudmouth than Noel Gallagher has publicly declared his support for the suburban-bred Monkeys. Which is not to say they haven't been criticized for having had it too easy. Last year Morrissey moaned, "They haven't had to work too hard. It's all a bit unnatural; it can't be gratifying. They haven't been driving up and down the M1 [highway] in a van for 15 years."

"Well, we *hadn't* been driving up and down the M1," laughs Cook. "He wasn't slagging us off—read what he actually fucking said. People love [the drama] but..."

"But I don't think it's worth getting wound up about," finishes Turner. "It's just funny, innit?"

## HAVE A GOOD TIME, ALL THE TIME

Funny now, sure. It's only recently that Alex Turner has felt comfortable in his role, though, and he admits that in the past the band sometimes acted aloof. But they accepted the Brit Awards for Best British Group and Best British Album in February via videotaped message...decked out in Village People and *Wizard of Oz* costumes, levity that would have been hard to imagine even a few months earlier. "I think we were a bit frightened or nervous, so we put up this defense mechanism," Turner says. "We were a bit bratty." Reading about themselves in tabloids—Turner was reportedly spotted at a Cold War Kids show in London with Kelly Osbourne, despite having been on the other side of England at the time—was weird at first, but the band are careful about their public face.

"We've always stayed out of the way of getting that kind of attention," says Helder. "We could have been up-front about doing amazingly stupid things, but [the press] never sees us do them." Turner claims it's the band members' long shared history that's gotten them through the mayhem, including the potentially tricky transition from Nicholson to O'Malley, and Kaiser Chiefs' Wilson thinks that camaraderie is what gives the Monkeys their edge. "The thing about them, which I look for in a band, is you can just see they're having a good time," he says. "That's when it doesn't look like bullshit."

When it's suggested that the wordiness and Britishness of Turner's lyrics may be an obstacle to Arctic Monkeys becoming massive in America, Turner is quick to disagree: "Look at how much American music is big in England, and everyone gets it. You listen to Eminem and hear a line you don't understand, so you go and find out what it means. It's more fulfilling that way." O'Malley and Helder say that Glocks and 40-ouncers were things English kids didn't know about until they heard songs about them, and Helder offers that the one thing he wants to do before he dies is shoot a gun at a firing range. "What's stopping you from just turning and shooting the person next to you?" he wonders. "Or yourself?"

"I don't know," counters Turner, egging his friend on. "What's stopping you?"

A month later, Arctic Monkeys are back in England, having just launched their tour. It's days before the release of *Favourite Worst Nightmare*, and Turner is having difficulty summoning the hand-wringing that people seem to expect from someone following up the fastest-selling debut in his country's history. "Everything's a good vibe and sunny," Turner says. But good parenting and close mates can't be credited for all of his clarity and serenity—it was there one piece of advice he's received that has helped him make sense of the past year and prepare him for more insanity to come?

"Whenever anyone asks that," he says, "I think of when we were getting our picture done with Ian Brown of the Stone Roses. The photographer said, 'Oh, can you just turn to your left?' And Ian, sorta cocky, just turned to me and said, 'Don't turn left for no one.'" ☺



The macho men accept a Brit Award in February.

### Half Man Half Biscuit

**WHO:** Absurdist Liverpool garage punks of the '80s whose songs name-checked such British figures as snooker referee Len Ganley, magician Ali Bongo, Benny Hill sidekick Bob Todd, and sportscares Dickie Davies. **COME AGAIN?** Brian Moore's head looks uncannily like London Parliamentum! (from "Dickie Davies Eyes")

### The Macc Lads

**WHO:** Comically lewd louts from Macclesfield who took pub rock on an endless bender with raucous grunts-alongs like "Beer & Sex & Chips n' Gravy" and "No Sheep 'til Buxton." **COME AGAIN?** "I couldn't give a rat turd if it's raining cats and dogs / Will you nick that fucking bastard and stop hiding in the bogs" (from "Stoppa Back")

### John Otway

**WHO:** This eccentric singer from Aylesbury has straddled the line between sincere and silly long enough to publish an autobio (*Cor Baby, That's Really Me!*) and a book of lyrics (*Deep & Meaningless*). **COME AGAIN?** "From Amersham to Missenden to Wendover to the Vale of Aylesbury / That's me heading down the 413" (from "A413 Revisited")

### Frank Sidebottom

**WHO:** He plays cheesy keyboards, wears a papier-mâché head, and alters the lyrics of songs he covers to mention his hometown. **COME AGAIN?** "I go shopping in Timperley / 'Cause we've got loads of shops / That's where I do the shopping for me mum / Five pounds of potatoes and loads of chaps" (from "Born in Timperley") **IRA ROBBINS**



THE ART OF THE

# Hustle





**Uncrowned** have a slick sound, endorsement deals, a potential monster hit, and major-label dreams. **Charles Aaron** pounds the pavement with rock's hungriest unsigned band to find out why talent and determination may no longer be enough.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MISTY KEASLER

Stephen Bazzell, Stuart Clark, and Jack Andrad make the most of the Wi-Fi at their Austin crash pad.



## IF YOU WERE TO IMAGINE THE SOUNDTRACK FOR THE DEATH OF THE RECORD INDUSTRY, YOU COULDN'T DO BETTER THAN AN ACOUSTIC VERSION OF "IKO IKO" PLAYED BY A GRAYING WHITE MAN IN A HAWAIIAN SHIRT AND KHAKI CARGO

shorts standing in the bar-lounge of the Four Seasons Hotel in Austin, Texas, on Friday night of this year's South by Southwest music festival. Back in the go-go '90s, this was schmooze central, where every wannabe player clocked SXSW time.

Now, with sales tanking, labels consolidating, and staffs liquidating, it's a comparative dead zone. Retired couples box-step by the fireplace while a handful of industry grunts soldier on, draining the last \$13 martini out of their soon-to-dry-up expense accounts.

"I'd rather drag my penis through ten miles of gravel than be here," says Stephen Bazzell, lead singer of the unsigned Atlanta modern-rock band Uncrowned. He slumps down in a plush chair, scowling from beneath a baseball cap pulled tight over a red do-rag. Bazzell and his bandmates are killing time while their manager, Bret Bassi, is on a sofa across the way chatting with a (seemingly sloshed) publishing exec from Universal Records and a certain songwriter-for-hire.

"It's some guy who helped develop a band I fucking hate," spits Bazzell. He won't elaborate, but later I discover it's the mastermind behind the Oklahoma band Hinder, the most commercially successful new rock act of the past year. Hinder's shlick as a sleazier Nickelback is pretty crass, but they did record the most undeniable power ballad of 2006, "Lips of an Angel" (also a country hit for Jack Ingram), cowed by the man on the sofa, Brian Howes. Uncrowned, who

are in the midst of recording songs they hope will lead to a major-label deal, have already met with a couple of cowriters—most notably Lee Miles, who worked on one of last year's surprise record breakthroughs, the debut album by emo-ish Florida pretty boys the Red Jumpsuit Apparatus, and who recently toiled on the latest for neo-grunge lifers Puddle of Mudd.

But as the members of Uncrowned gain more faith in their own abilities, they feel increasingly uneasy about the cowriting gambit, a driving force behind more of today's rock hits than anyone cares to admit. They're trying to forge their own sound, but they also want to succeed, or least make a living as a band, especially since Bazzell and headstrong guitarist Jack Andrad have been writing music together since 2001 and touring the Southeast with different lineups since 2003.

"Dues have been paid for a while," says Axel Lowe, the drive-time DJ at Atlanta alternative-rock station 99X, who has known the band for years. "They're tenacious and likable and talented, and I think they're getting really close. It's just a matter of getting that one hit song."

But is it?

In many ways, Uncrowned exemplify the volatile, vulnerable state of today's music business, a world rife with confusion, delusion, great promise, and great risk. With CDs being eclipsed by downloading (which brings in far less revenue),

major record companies are more desperate than ever to score megapopular acts. A band that sells, say, 300,000 albums is negligibly profitable, at best. The large-scale services a major offers—distribution, marketing, promotion—are more suited to pushing Justin Timberlake from two million to five million copies sold. Few new rock bands approach that level, and it'll be obvious when they do: They will be the guys with the sculpted stubble and volumized hair, starring in a glossy video set in a church filled with flickering candelabra, directed by some guy named Nigel Dick. Prepare to grimace just so on the heartrending chorus (that you didn't write).

And what does a "hit" mean anymore? Radio rotates only a handful of songs to an ever-declining audience, and MTV airs just a smattering of videos. Fans

## "THEY'RE WAITING TO BE SWEEPED OFF THEIR FEET BY A LABEL."

A RECORD EXEC

and Tapes 'N Tapes. Artists who have yet to release a record are pursuing publishing and sponsorship deals. One of the most talked-about indie bands of the past few years—Clap Your Hands Say Yeah—is perhaps more notable for its no-label business model than its music.

But the problem with a DIY approach is that you have to do it yourself. And that means a generation

of artists who spend countless hours attempting to manage their own affairs and hustle every angle. But what if you're not Pete Wentz or Jay-Z or Arcade Fire? What if you can't trade on a punk or hip-hop or indie tradition? What if your numerous marketing ideas haven't quite panned out? What if you've got a killer MySpace page and consistently draw 300 people in clubs three states away and sell several



A Rock Ridge Music rep gives a listen.



Manager Bret Bass (second from left) works the Four Seasons

are more likely to encounter new artists via TV commercials or soundtracks, video games, file-sharing, Internet radio, MySpace, YouTube, etc. People are listening to much more music, and it's not uncommon for a random track to get passed around or downloaded by millions in a weekend's time. But it's rare for a single song to capture the mass imagination long enough for it to translate into a real career for the artist. So why would a young, loud, aggressive rock band like Uncrowned, or their management, bank on that one demographically transcendent fluke?

"Their problem is, they're functioning in the old system of waiting to be swept off their feet by a label or some giganto marketing push that's going to propel them to stardom," says a record executive who has met with the band and asked not to be named. "The new paradigm calls for you to take care of your own niche first."

The new paradigm. Maximizing outside revenue streams. Monetizing digital content. CDs as loss leaders. More and more you hear these buzz phrases thrown around by the type of people who, back in the '90s, would've been arguing abstractly about whether Kurt Cobain was a hypocrite or a savior. It's finally a DIY world (beyond of political content, of course). Musicians across all genres are necessarily, obsessively business-minded; it's not just gimme-the-loot rappers anymore. Since the Internet can reach millions of consumers directly, even standard indie labels may soon be passé—managers and booking agents wield the influence. The money isn't in record sales (down 20 percent this year), but in diversifying your brand beyond hoodie/T-shirt merch—just recently, press releases have hyped Beck's Sketchel shoulder bag, an All-American Rejects-designed Pepsi can, a skate-shoe partnership between Ennies and Chester Bennington's tattoo studio, and an Urban Outfitters indie-rock tour featuring the Ponys, Voxtro,

thousand copies of your self-released record, but can barely pay the rent? What if you were a passing industry fancy a couple years back, but now that you're a far better band, interest has waned? What if you're so anxious to jump-start your career that you let your manager come hat in hand to the *freaking guy from Hinder*?

What if you're Uncrowned?

## "HEY, MAN, OUR DICKS ARE LIKE DIVINING RODS."

It's Thursday night at SXSW, and Uncrowned—singer Bazzell, 25; guitarist Andrad, 24; bassist Stuart Clark, 25; and drummer Scott Sellers, 26—are surveying Austin's Sixth Street. The downtown area, closed off by police barricades, is a product tie-in petri dish, where the five-day festival's 11,000 registrants, 1,400 bands, and thousands more hangers-on try to cultivate a cultural buzz. But for Uncrowned, whose Friday show isn't an official SXSW event, it's a plum chance to scam—in a professional capacity, of course.

"If you're in a band and you walk up to a girl, it's an event, when normally it might qualify as stalking," says Andrad, laughing. With his perma-shades, carefully mussed thicker of hair, three ornate tattoos (all Dali paintings), chunky silver jewelry, and confident, louché stride, he's the group's unquestioned leader. A diplomat's son born in New Jersey and raised in Italy, France, England, Spain, and Israel, he speaks five languages fluently. Tonight, his strategy is to take Polaroids with potential fans and write the band's show info on the back. Then the Polaroid can be used as a free ticket.

After the band promise their manager that they won't stop until the camera is empty, we're off. For the next two hours, it's a blur of clingy sundresses, numbingly tight low-rise jeans, blinding tans, pierced belly buttons, strappy heels, French manicures, and sheepish hugs. The guys' charm is easy and unflagging. The campaign peaks with a couple of athletic blondes in microminis and black stiletto boots.



**MORE AT SPIN.COM** For more photos of Uncrowned's Austin invasion and to hear what they actually sound like, go to [www.spin.com/uncrowned](http://www.spin.com/uncrowned)





Takin' it to the streets: Uncrowned had a hard time to raise awareness of...  
Uncrowned



## UNCROWNED

"Equestrian instructors," confides Sellers, the husky, wisecracking drummer with a rooster-ish rocker "do. "They invited us to go horseback riding out by the river and through the hills. They said they'd make it worth our while."

Do you think they'll come to the show? I ask.

"I can only pray," he answers, folding his hands.

Then, the group is suddenly confronted by one of the festival's most familiar sights—a street teamer hawking free Trojans. A late-20s brunette wearing a tennis shirt and slacks, she hands out samples and enthusiastically asks, "Are you a band?" The guys nod, give a perfunctory run-through of the Polaroid routine, and are quickly back on the move.

I think she really wanted to come to the show, I say to Andrad. Didn't you think she was cute?

"I don't do cute. I do hot," he announces, grinning.

Don't you wanna get any guys to come?

"I was always told that in order to be a rock star, you needed two things: The girls wanna have sex with you, and the guys wanna be you. If we get the girls, the guys will come."

Is that what you really think, or are you just bullshitting?

"That's your job to figure out," he replies, still grinning.

It's a fool's game to judge anyone by what goes on at SXSW. The hypercompetitive, overstuffed atmosphere can turn a meek Takka Takka-streaming blogger into a SoCo-swilling blowhard with an agenda. And away from the festival free-for-all, Uncrowned revert to being earnest, humble, committed musicians who just want their songs to be heard. The band's self-released debut CD, 2005's *Simple Sick Device*, is a skillfully arranged maelstrom of melodic post-grunge with electronic tinges and huge choruses. It's also an obvious triangulation of Smashing Pumpkins, Pearl Jam, and Nine Inch Nails, which Andrad admits ("It's like our little redheaded stepchild"). But a newer track, "Devil in My Hand" (recorded gratis by the owner of a cush Atlanta studio), which melds grinding guitars and falsetto vocals, and has a boyish cri de coeur refrain—"Say it with conviction / Say it like you lived it"—is as affecting as anything currently on modern-rock radio.

What gives Uncrowned a genuine artistic and emotional core is the intense, unlikely friendship between Andrad and Bazzell. The former grew up in relative luxury overseas, worshipping his father the Air Force military attaché (later, Jack was even recruited by the State Department); the latter was born while his father the con artist was in prison, and spent his teen years in youth homes and with foster families. At age eight, he was singing "My Prerogative" on street corners for spare change, and at ten, he was helping his dad balk a church mission and later rob the minister's house. Bazzell and his parents spent many nights sleeping in their Ford Fairlane. And at 11, he remembers watching federal agents chase his dad into the woods behind a Wendy's.

"That was a big year for me," he says with a trace of sarcasm. "We got caught in a hotel in Suwanee, Georgia. The feds knocked on the door, and me and my mom hid under the bed. Beforehand, my father had said we should bring the car across the street, and he'd meet us and we'd be out of there. I don't know how he got away, but here he comes, and he runs right by us, says, 'I love you,' and went down a hill, and that's the last I ever saw of him. Then these dudes with suits and .40-calibers stuck one in my face." Bazzell wouldn't see his mom for three years.

He was immediately on his own, but that's when things turned around. "I was finally taken in by this family—it's hard to find a home for an 11-, 12-year-old kid, everybody wants a two-year-old—and that's when the musical world came into focus for me. [Smashing Pumpkins'] *Siamese Dream* came out, and then Korn's first album—all these angry, energetic albums—and I had all this stuff that was pent up in me for so long. Those albums were really my epiphany."

Wanting to be more involved in music, Bazzell joined his school chorus, worked at strengthening his voice, and eventually was offered a scholarship to the University of Georgia—for opera. He lacked a few credits, so he attended a junior college in Gainesville. But the dream of Puccini arias soon ended.

"My grandfather, who was the only person I ever felt was a real father figure to me, was dying of cancer," he continues. "I just felt alone and started binge drinking and let myself go. I would be in there trying to sing 'Ave Maria' drunk. I started a punk band, my first band. I had dyed-orange hair and I'd pass out onstage. It was like this Nick Cave droning creepiness that would go into a drug-induced, Iggy Pop chaos thing. I just embraced that disdain for life, and the music was so passionate. Iggy Pop is a god, man. You find that and it's like, *That's rock'n'roll!* You wanna wrap your skin around it. But it just became too intense for me. I spiraled out over the edge."





Uncrowned, live  
at Darwin's Pub,  
Austin, Texas

And that's when the partners met. "Irony of ironies, Jack was at our last show. I walked up to him and told him that his band sucked, but he was good. And for some reason, he saw something in me."

Andrad was adrift at the time, as well. He'd been studying music at Miami Dade College North, but dropped out when his father died in 1999, and then moved to Atlanta. A cosmopolitan shredder who loved Judas Priest and Slipknot, he believed he'd found his singer, but the orphan ex-punk wavered.

"It was awkward in the beginning," says Bazzell. "He'd ask me for my vocal ideas, and I'd be out in left field; and I'd ask what his ideas were, and I couldn't comprehend what he was saying—so we made awkward music. But then a friendship grew, a true musical brotherhood. Jack could've ditched me many times, but he believed in what I could do. Basically, he saved my life."

Bassist Clark joined early on, but it took seven drummers and a few years before Sellers auditioned in 2004. And it has taken another two and a half years for the band to fully connect. "We're actually starting to make music from all of our influences," says Bazzell. "I feel like Jack and I are just finding our artistic voice. Before, we were getting to a place where we were gonna make art, but we weren't doing it. Now it's starting to feel like we are."

His words, which usually have a wounded, wary edge, sharpen. "I don't deserve anything for what I've been through—life doesn't work that way. But I do believe this band deserves to be heard. With my original experiences put with this music and these guys and this chemistry..." He pauses. "I just feel lucky to be alive. I wanna live 500 years."

**"WE USED TO JUMP  
AROUND LIKE  
MONKEYS ON ACID."  
DRUMMER SCOTT SELLERS**

**IT'S PROBABLY NOT THE BEST IDEA TO DISCUSS** your future over Jell-O shots and scrambled eggs. But that's SXSW. The Texas sun scorches the Iron Cactus patio, and everyone is squinting as Uncrowned and manager Bassi meet with Jason Spiewak, a founding partner of Rock Ridge Music, an "independent" label affiliated with Warner Music Group.

After some industry chatter—digital and mobile marketing, etc.—Spiewak leans forward, almost smirking. "So I'm curious about your little label-shopping expedition," he says, referring to the band's fairly public pursuit of a record deal. "What exactly are you looking for?"

"We're looking for an A&R who can really be a part of our family and grow with us," Andrad says, but Spiewak cuts him off.

"You know there's a chance that guy will be gone by the time your record comes out. Selling promise isn't good enough. It's about what you can bring to the table now."

Andrad's cool demeanor begins to dissolve. "Well, what we bring to the table is that we're a hardworking band with kickass songs and great stories," he says, a bit defensively. "We've done things that other unsigned bands haven't—we've got instrument endorsements from a half-dozen companies, we have a guitar

in the Hard Rock Cafe's memorabilia collection, we've had songs on television shows. We've even done house remixes and Spanish remixes of our songs."

"Is that based on a fan base, or are you just hoping?"

"The Latin rock market is huge," Andrad replies.

"Listen," says Spiewak, "labels want to know basic facts: What sales history do you have? In what touring markets do you have a strong following? Do you have a

## UNCROWNED

substantial online presence? And we have to get back to the music. Music powers the format, not the other way around."

"All I know," Andrad says firmly, "is that we've put our lives into this band, and we're going to accomplish great things, and we've already accomplished great things, and if somebody wants to be involved with that, fine."

Finally, Bassi, who had gotten up to take a call while most of the ball-breaking transpired, suggests that we ask for the check. Nobody objects.

It's meetings like this that remind you why virtually every band that has any success, no matter how underground, has a cold-eyed manager. Even the savviest musician can buckle under the burden of writing songs, touring, and handling business. For years, Andrad was de facto manager, and if not for his dauntless ingenuity, Uncrowned would've crumbled.

But after playing a number of label showcases and not signing a deal, the band had a bitter split with their drummer at the time, and things took a turn. First, they entered and won the 2004 Shot at the Cabo Wabo battle of the bands, sponsored by the Hard Rock Cafe and Sammy Hagar's Cabo Wabo Tequila. The grand prize was an invitation to play Hagar's Mexican Meltdown birthday bash in Cabo San Lucas.

"I thought the battle of the bands was a bad idea, but they didn't ask for my opinion on that one," says David Prasse, an Atlanta attorney who works with Mastodon and the Whigs, and has supported the band pro bono since before it was even named Uncrowned (after a Charles Bukowski poem about an unsung boxer who defeats champions in nontitle fights). "It's too much like sports. I know, in a sense, music is competitive, but battle of the bands? It's art. It's not arm wrestling."

Still, the rock-star treatment was seductive: Hagar's driver chauffeured them from the airport to the lavish, all-expenses-paid Hotel Hacienda Beach Resort, where the staff greeted them with margaritas—"From Sammy!" As Andrad wrote in a blog post, they were "like four kids at Christmas." After the show, they were lured into a beer-chugging contest by the dark prince of multiplatinum rock cheesery, Nickelback's Chad Kroeger. To make a gross story short, Kroeger and Andrad faced off and slammed between 11 and 13 Coronas each, before nature said no. A queasy Andrad was led over



UNCROWNED @ Darwin's  
Fri March 16 @ 6:00pm

to a trash can by Kroeger, who stuck two fingers down the guitarist's throat. Without blinking, Kroeger walked over to a sink, washed off his arm, and barked, "Bartender, two more." Next night was a party for TV's *Blind Date*, where the guys so captivated the producers that they were later flown out to Los Angeles to tape an episode. Three of the four band members participated (Bazzell had a girlfriend at the time), and at the end of the show, the band performed a set in a Hollywood club.



**Cat-like Reflexes!**

During this time, Bassi, who had heard Uncrowned's song "You Denny" on the online radio station GarageBand.com, e-mailed the group. A drummer for more than a decade who also has an MBA, Bassi, 29, had just started working with the Chicago firm KMA Management, which reps a number of young rock bands but is best known for breaking nu-metal ragers Disturbed. Laconically cool but persistent, he admired Uncrowned's skepticism. "They drilled me with question after question," he says. "They wanted a layout of what it would be like working together. They asked me about my time commitment, since I was working with other bands."

Bassi's first goal was to have the band refocus musically, suggesting that Bazzell take voice lessons and Sellers drum lessons. He wanted Andrad to concentrate more on songwriting. "We used to jump around onstage like monkeys on acid," says Sellers, "but Bret said cut that shit out and strip it down."

In a way, their SXSW show was the culmination of a two-year rehab. And when I speak with Jason Spiewak a week later, he relents: "I wish I'd seen them before we talked, because the live show is badass. They have the one thing that you can't rehearse, and that's believability. I believe that they're up there and it's real."

But the fact remains that Uncrowned want to be stars in a way that is increasingly endangered. It practically takes a priestly blessing for a youngish rock band to cross over to a mainstream audience—i.e., be recognized by people who don't follow costs, serve your core audience, and forgo the foie gras (it's too cruel, anyway).

Bassi demurs. "Our company approaches bands that we believe have the ability to be, and want to be, wildly popular on a nationwide scale," he says. "And that usually leads us down the path of a major label, because they have the marketing money and distribution channels. It's riskier than a DIY approach, where you sell your music online and keep everything in-house, but the rewards are potentially greater. In developing a band like Uncrowned, we try to do everything now that an indie label

## "WE'VE EVEN DONE HOUSE REMIXES OF OUR SONGS."

GUITARIST JACK ANDRAD

would be doing, so we can show a major they're taking the reins of a horse that's already moving."

He's backed up by an unlikely source. "I'd rather be on no label or a major label," says Nick Stern, manager of Clap Your Hands Say Yeah. "Indies usually can't sell a ton of records—and you only get a percentage of those sales, anyway. They can't pay you an advance and they can't give you tour support, so how are you going to

make any money? How are you able to quit your day job, which is the goal for all these kids? At least a major label can cut you a check up front."

But Uncrowned have grander dreams. They want to put on the eyeliner and watch the lights come up on 30,000 people and eat Kobe filet and be respected artists. And after talking to Bassi a couple of weeks after SXSW, I find out what that kind of ambition ultimately means.

"This is a tough one," Bassi says slowly, "because David Prasse has been with the band from the inception. But we're transitioning into working with Jeffrey Light, the attorney for Christina Aguilera and Red Hot Chili Peppers. It's one of those things. The band is all about building a family, and David was, or is, a part of that family. But with the kind of contacts Jeffrey Light has, he can go straight to the top."

It's rare when you're working on a story that you get a legitimate chill, but I did when I got off the phone with Bassi. Prasse, who cut his teeth booking shows in Athens during the early-'80s underground-rock renaissance, is one of the smartest, most genuine, plugged-in people I've ever met in the industry. And there had been several times I'd wondered why he still had anything to do with Uncrowned.

"One thing that's different about those guys from the indie school," Prasse says carefully, "is that they're not precious about what they're doing. They wanna reach a lot of people. With some musicians, what they're doing is from the heart, and they don't care if anybody pays attention. Whether R.E.M. was like that or not, they convinced us they were, and it endeared us to them." He hesitates for a second. "With Uncrowned, I just don't know." ☼



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## Not Much. Just Chillin'.

Post-rehab, Americana's dark diarist kicks back and shares **BY WILL HERMES**

**Wilco**  
*Sky Blue Sky* ★★★★★  
NONESUCH



The pastoral LP is a rock'n'roll tradition. It's what happens when a band—motivated by tinnitus, bankruptcy, drug-crazed meltdowns, or merely an aesthetic conversion—strips things down to the gentle, the pretty, the chillin' by-the-fishin'-hole-with-my-Martin-D50-acoustic-which-incidentally-is-worth-ten-times-what-you-paid-for-your-car. Rock pastoralists usually follow darker, noisier records and tend toward the soberly optimistic, or at least the comfortably fatalistic, offering up salt-of-the-earth verities about life and death and love and loss. The Grateful Dead had *Workingman's*

*Dead*. Springsteen had *Nebraska*. Nirvana had *MTV Unplugged* in New York. Now Wilco—in their continuing quest to rank with rock's Big Machers—have *Sky Blue Sky*. Build a campfire and break out the pot brownies.

Or not. "Maybe the sun will shine today / The clouds will blow away," sings Jeff Tweedy to begin his first studio record since a prescription-drug rehab stint in 2004. "I will try to understand / Everything has its plan." There's a faint 12-step, one-day-at-a-time vibe to many of the songs here, with lyrics about being "strung out like a kite," about survival and redemption and being thankful and maybe higher powers. Of course, in these Britney-head-shaving days, this is our cultural lingua franca as much as it is addic-speak. Welcome to the group, and thanks for sharing.

Wilco have always seemed like a band

looking for an identity—or avoiding one. That was part of their charm, and Tweedy's slightly spooky Midwestern blankness lent itself to all sorts of settings. But here's the album you might've expected from this former alt-country poster boy before he started getting all experimental on 1999's *Summerteeth*. *Sky Blue Sky* is basically an urbane roots

**Wilco have always seemed like a band looking for an identity.**

record, flooded with sunny, ragtime melodies, chooglin' Southern-rock grooves, slightly off-kilter song structures, swirling organ riffs, and sparkling guitar lines. The sprouting jam-band vibe of 2004's *A Ghost Is Born* fully blooms here, minus all the winking. Experiment-minded producer/

player/mixologist Jim O'Rourke, a major influence on *Ghost* and the band's pivotal *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, is mostly sidelined. Up front is alt-country/out-jazz guitar god Nels Cline, playing so tastefully he sounds as if he were on loan from Steely Dan, when he's not channeling Jerry Garcia. Between him, Tweedy, and third guitarist/keyboardist Pat Sansone, they've made the most beguiling guitar-rock record of the 21st century.

*Sky Blue Sky* ain't all blue skies. Its bliss is blistered; loneliness lurks behind love, war shadows art. But like a new yoga convert, it is determined, and its happiness feels hard won. After a handful of listens, I only wish the songs were more indelible, though they're comfy as worn sweatshirts. But time may prove their durability. As is, this is a near-perfect album by a band that seems, finally, to have found their identity. At least for the moment.



Björk: "Tell me, are you that somebody?"



## Whatever She Says, Goes

Despite esteemed guests, the auteur rules

**Björk**  
Volta ★★★★★

ONE LITTLE INDIAN/ATLANTIC

It takes a brave woman to second-guess Timbaland. Or a foolish one. Or Björk. Word that the Icelandic iconoclast had retitled the results of her in-studio tryst with Mr. Mosely dashed any hopes that she'd abandon herself to horny megapop escapism. And Volta's amazing opener, "Earth Intruders," dispels any doubts about the strength of her art instincts. Over Tim's stomping beat (weirdly redolent of the introductory jackboots of *Never Mind the Bollocks*), Björk layers percussive clatter from the Congolese ensemble Konono No. 1 for a funky stomp that's equal parts pre- and postmodern.

She channels that avant-trad feeling into the brassy arrangements, suitable for both a medieval Viking fortress or contemporary concert hall. "Tribal" is

Björk's word for this sound, and the free-form drum tattoos that Chris Corsano and Lightning Bolt's Brian Chippendale poured out fit that description. But she also contains each drummer's wilder experimental side, and similarly shapes the kora sound of Mallam tamsir Toumani Diabate into lovely but Björk-friendly harp

**She dashes any hope of horny megapop escapism.**

imitations. She integrates her guests on such solipsistic terms that "collaboration" is a misnomer—they're simply extensions of her own self.

"My Juvenile," a duet with Antony Hegarty (of Antony and the Johnsons), even casts the falsetto warbler in the role of her inner child. Fortunately, whether she's orchestrating a B-movie death march ("Vertebrae by Vertebrae") or a seaside fantasia ("Wanderlust"), her vision is worth the price of submission.

KEITH HARRIS

## Au Revoir Simone

The Bird of Music ★★★★★

THE SECRET RECORD COMPANY

Synth and sensuality power Brooklyn group's debut

This all-female trio would like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony—though the world they inhabit is akin to that of a Philip K. Dick novel, where the robots are more real than the humans. Opening with a beatific, otherworldly campfire sing-along ("The Lucky One"), they move on to a percolating mash note to Gary Numan ("I Couldn't Sleep") and a deliciously icy tribute to Brian Wilson ("Fallen Snow"). Powered by vintage keyboards, a lockstep beat box, and gorgeous, wide-eyed warbling, the Simones create make-out music for your inner android.

SHANNON ZIMMERMAN

## Balkan Beat Box

Nu Med ★★★★★

DUJ

A global peacekeeping mission that you can dance to

Ever the uniters, this New York-based Gypsy/Jewish troupe have extended their reach on these culture-melding sessions. Highlights include a melody remembered from a Moroccan childhood, a first-time rap from a Syrian singer trained in Egyptian styles, and a duet by London Bulgarian Choir vocalists who participated via e-mail. Underneath all those worldly voices, traditional Middle Eastern instruments pair off with electronic beats, and the ompah-backed grooves are sultry enough to inspire a different kind of uniting—if you know what I mean.

LINDSEY THOMAS

## Battles

Mirrored ★★★★★

WARP

Songs guaranteed to start a mosh pit at band camp

Remember "shock and awe"? On their debut album, Battles bring that brutal, futuristic precision to the art-rock avant-garde. Featuring keyboardist/guitarist Ian Williams of math rockers Don Caballero and drummer John Stanier of post-hardcore virtuosos Helmet, this New York-based group layers sound manipulator Tyondra Braxton's alien vocals over muscular, off-kilter grooves. Think Captain Beefheart, if he'd been a fan of kraut rock and Animal Collective—or, on the deep, martial drums of single

"Atlas," Marilyn Manson. For rock that's both fist-pumping and forward-looking, this album suggests that Battles have few peers. **MARC HOGAN**

## Ben & Vesper

All This Could Kill You ★★★★★

SOUNDSAMMARE

Beware the pitfalls of riding on indie-rock coattails

The Sufjan Seal of Approval ought to be indie hard currency, but Stevens can only nudge doors open—he can't bestow the mellifluous subtlety of his own work on his friends. And with their flaccid, too-cool folk pop, husband-and-wife songwriters Ben and Vesper Stamper squander any love by association they might've earned from their guest banjoist/bolshoi. Ben's flat, remote vocals suggest seriousness, but he mostly sounds bored, even when he ought to be played (the syrupy ode to a newborn "B Mo.") or excited (the murky ode to life "Live Free or Try"). When Vesper chimes in, things brighten up considerably—think *Ida* and early Low—but even those spikes aren't really worth the wait. **JOSH MODELL**

## Black Moth Super Rainbow

Dandelion Gum ★★★★★

CRANFEST

Makes "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds" sound sober

Imagine Air's "Sexy Boy" played in a dingy shack for 45 minutes

straight by fashion-unconscious 'shroom enthusiasts with a psych-rock fetish, and you've got a peek into Dandelion Gum. A loose, joyous groove defers any hint of psychedelia's dark underbelly on this Pennsylvania group's fourth album, which rings with cheery flutes, analog synths, vocoder-soaked vocals, and very strange sentiments, as band members named Power Pill Fiat and the Seven Fields of Aphelion deliver inscrutable songs with titles like "Jump Into My Mouth and Breathe the Stardust." **JOSH MODELL**

## Bone Thugs-N-Harmony

Strength & Loyalty ★★★★★

FULL SURFACE/INTERSCOPE

Cleveland motormouths are back from the crossroads

Bone Thugs were always better off concentrating on harmony over thugging: Anybody can talk shit, but these guys are still alone when it comes to rapping a mile a minute—melodically. And now, with the assistance of producer Swizz Beatz, the veteran group's dizzying flows remain flawless (though they do miss Bizzy Bone, their ODB, who left in 2005). "Flowmotion" and "Bump in the Trunk" are frenzied masterpieces. And while "Lil L.O.V.E.," the chintzy collaboration with Mariah Carey and Bow Wow, is a clumsy career, "Never Forget Me" is an epic, even triumphest closer that rightfully addresses the Thugs' legacy. **THOMAS GOUANPOULOS**



Balkan Beat Box: A musical forum for settling international disputes

## Boris, With Michio Kurihara

Rainbow ★★★½

DRAG CITY

Sludge-punk visionaries evoke a less noisy, nodded-out time

Further cementing their status as collaborators on the level of Ludacris and Vichy France, the Japanese power trio Boris throw down with psych-rock virtuoso Michio Kurihara, whom bearded-nerds know from bands such as White Heaven and Ghost. Everyone goes back to their '70s roots on this surprisingly chill outing. Michio's solos are the sound of bong hits to *Dark Side of the Moon*, and his guitar style blends brilliantly with that of Boris axwoman Wata, who matches him feint for nimble feint. Music for space gods returning to earth. **JOE GROSS**

## Brakesbrakes-brakes

The Beatific Visions ★★★½

ROUGH TRADE/WORLDS FAIR

Still-feisty Brits temper their outbursts with—love?

Having tripled their name to avoid confusion with the Philadelphia-based Brakes, this English band open their second album with a baptism-as-fight scene ("Hold Me in the River"). The pub stompers are as rowdy as ever, but they're balanced here by laid-back ruminations on romance. Who knew Eamon Hamilton could calm his wildly cracking voice long enough to walk hand in hand through the park? Still, for party starts and danger seekers, the dancery "Spring Chicken" and 60-second freak-out "Porcupine or Pineapple" display the band's mad shriek at its most unhinged. **LINSEY THOMAS**

## The Bravery

The Sun and the Moon ★★

ISLAND

Harmless trendiness devolves into grating self-importance

Step back a bit and the Bravery look like a lark: bouncy, bass-driven, fashionista New Yorkers channeling New Order and inadvertently biting the Killers' style—things could be worse. But zoom in on this overproduced second album, dripping with newly emboldened lyrical pretensions, and you'll find cracks in the enjoyable clichés. A couple of Killers-lite rumpshakers remain, but they're sunk in the mire by hackneyed ballads

about troubled teens (the god-awful "Tragedy Bound") and choruses that strain for the rafters in the most painfully obvious ways. **JOSH MODELL**

## Circa Survive

On Letting Go ★★

EQUAL VISION

A long-distance runaround to a very forgettable fire

On their second album, this atmospheric post-hardcore quintet—emo's simultaneous answer to Yes and U2—mostly prove that

Sunny Day Real Estate combined those two influences much better a decade ago. Merging elliptical lyrics about personal-spiritual renewal with circular rhythms and effects-soaked guitar, but without any of Sunny Day's hooks or dynamics, Circa Survive hang everything on the dramatic, upper-register pipes of vocalist Anthony Green (ex-Sacrosin). But his bandmates get so lost trying to fill up the space around him that sometimes Green sounds as if he's singing on another record altogether. **AARON BURGESS**

# Golden Child

Neptunes protégé still hungry for a hit

## Kenna

Make Sure They See

My Face ★★★½

STAR TRAK/INTERSCOPE

You can understand why Kenna wants people to see his face: *New Sacred Cow*, this Ethiopian-born synth-hop savant's inventive 2003 debut, won him buckets of buzz but didn't make him the household name his record label and producer (the Neptunes' Chad Hugo) were

hoping for. (Check out Malcolm Gladwell's best-seller *Blink* for an illuminating account of the album's tortured history.)

Looking for the pop validation that eluded him last time, Kenna hired Hugo's partner, Pharrell Williams, to helm two tracks on this follow-up to *New Sacred Cow*. Williams' Midas touch has lost some of its sure-shot

**Left-field sonic alchemy is Kenna's creative strength.**

gleam of late, but on "Loose Wires," while Kenna bemoans "all the hits that I've been missing," the producer hooks up a radio-ready beat that sounds like a choice outtake from Kenna's "Milkshake" sessions. "Say Goodbye to Love," Williams' other contribution, has a jittery live-band feel, like Chic fronted by Dave Gahan.

The rest of the album, produced by Hugo, proffers similarly clever juxtapositions: In "Sun Red Sky Blue," Kenna works a rock-guy yowl over percolating drum-machine funk, while "Out of Control" cribbs both the Ramones' lyrics and the Rapture's disco-punk groove. That left-field sonic alchemy is Kenna's creative strength, and he hasn't sacrificed it here in the name of mainstream accessibility. He's realized that a little studio bling is just one more trick in his bag. **MIKAEL WOOD**



## The Clientele

### God Save the Clientele ★★★

MERCE

Rainy-day pop that could stand to get out more often

These Londoners specialize in melancholic, Beatlesque melodies threaded through phrases like "The world is dark" ("No Dreams Last Night"), "You end up alone" ("Isn't Life Strange?"), and "It's gonna be a lonely, lonely day" ("The Queen of Seville"). That's not necessarily a problem, as the lush sound pedal steel that goesos the latter two tracks proves. Still, ringleader Alasdair MacLean can be a sad sack, and his band succeeds best when it shakes off the doldrums: "Here Comes the Phantom"—a sweet-and-sunny "Daydream Believer" pop rocker—and the disco-inflected "Bookshop Casanova" are the album's best moments. SHANNON ZIMMERMAN

## Chris Cornell

Carry On ★★

SURETONE/INTERSCOPE

Grunge forefather suffers from amnesia—or just bad taste?

Apparently, Chris Cornell spent his grunge glory days wishing that he were in Stone Temple Pilots. On his second solo outing, the former Soundgarden

and Audioslave frontman dresses down the faux-Zeppelin ballade of 1999's *Euphoria Morning* with heaps of fuzz and cock-rock posturing that suspiciously recall a certain much-maligned San Diego quartet. The opener sounds like a rip of radio smash "Sex Type Thing" and is even called "No Such Thing." Maybe this is what living in France does to you. KYLE ANDERSON

## Dan Deacon

### Spiderman of the Rings ★★★

CAPRICE

Baltimore goofball packs ingenious sonic punch

Dan Deacon may look like Bill Nye the Science Guy, but he's more like Dr. Demento. This one-man A/V club party makes low-budget electronic pop that's as bizarre as it is uproarious. Deacon's first proper album (after several limited releases) tricks out Devo-esque new wave with eight-bit beats, cartoon sound effects, and munchkin-pitched Ludacris quotes. While a classically trained background shows through the blissed-out drones of "The Crystal Cat," Deacon's weird-science experiments more often test your funny bone—and shake your moneymaker. MARC HOGAN

## Digitalism

### Idealism ★★★

ASTRALWORKS

Late-'90s rocktronica nostalgia is here—woo-hoo!

Jens Moelle and Ismail Tuefekci may be German, but the tracks they make as Digitalism slot right in with the recent wave of Parisian house music for headbangers. *Idealism* shows off plenty of blaring synth riffs; "Anything New" sounds like Fatboy Slim in robot drag, the title track crosshatches Underworld snarl with Daft Punk cheese,

and "Digitalism in Cairo" vivifies the Cure to simultaneously disorienting and fist-pumping effect. "I am the biggest party ever," boasts the sole line of "Home Zone," and that might not be such an outrageous claim. MICHAELANGELO MATOS

## Dungen

### Tio Bitar ★★★

REMADO

If you want to soar angelic, just take a pinch of psychedelic

Led by wunderkind multi-instrumentalist Gustav Ejstes, Dungen

keep a fierce distance from the fleeting indie-pop trends of their fellow Scandinavians. Here, with Swedish lyrics, lysergic swatches, and breezy flute passages, they display the same studied appreciation for Hendrix jams and Nordic folk that marked their 2004 U.S. breakthrough, *To Det Lugnt*. But on this new batch of mood enhancers, Ejstes orchestrates a more intricate balance—ebullient piano melodies tether spiraling feedback on "Gör Det Nu," while "En Gång I År Kom Det En Tår" filters triumphant guitar riffs through pastoral dirges. *Tio Bitar* may start with weeping sirens, but Dungen reject bells and whistles, creating a subtle hallucinatory pastiche. JENNIFER MAERZ

## Electrelane

### No Shouts No Calls ★★★

TOO PURE

Post-rock—it's not just for wannabe jazz dorks

The English ladies of Electrelane do angelic and droney equally well, but it's when they combine the two into a simmering two-pop/kraut-rock stew that slight pleasures become tiny triumphs. The mix is better than ever on their fourth album: "The Greater Times" coaxes sunlight from murk, imagining Stereolab without the detached cool; and "After the Call" teases with sweet nothing before smashing with indie-fried guitars. Even when Electrelane ditch the cheer completely (as on the towering, far-faded instrumental "Five"), they inspire more smiles than growls. JOSH MOELLE

## No Fairy Tale

### Alt rock's fiery earth mother bares her teeth

## Tori Amos

### American Doll Posse

★★★★

EPIC

Not merely the most confrontational, catchy, and guitar-heavy music of Tori Amos' career, this abrupt about-face from 2005's sedate *The Beekeeper* is arguably the singer/pianist's greatest, and undeniably sniest, album. Now reserving her motherly side for family time, Amos shifts into warrior mode, with anthems so balmy that her rep as the remote princess of airy-fairy twinkle begs for serious revision.

Start with the swaggering "Teenage Hustling," where Amos warns a sneaky young contender not to go "skankin' around" her man. Then check out the ferocious "You Can Bring Your Dog," in which she entreates a "pretty boy" to "play the

wolf for the evening." Her songs had become long and loose over the years; here they're tight and sharp and snarling.

No longer just singing to the converted, this consummate cult icon now sounds committed to taking on the world. From the softly seething opener, "Yo George," to the climactic lament "Dark Side of the Sun," this 13-track, but typically succinct, statement deals with life during "the

**The consummate cult icon is now taking on the world.**

madness of King George" and calls on women to stop disappearing behind fragmented feminine roles and reach out to their religion-polarized brothers. Trading obscure metaphors for assertive personae, Amos sings with a remarkably foreboding focus. Anger has made her accessible and her songs instantly memorable. BARRY WALTERS



Electrelane:  
Emma Peel or  
John Steed? They  
can't decide.



## Fields

Everything Last  
Winter ★★½

BLACK LAB

**They'll cut out your heart  
with a delicate touch**

Not to be confused with Field Music, the Field Mice, the Field, or Korn bassist Fields, Fields are a British/Icelandic combo that take typically bright pop partides (male/female harmonies, quavering synth lines) and rearrange them into devastating laments. A brusque kiss-off ("You're 18 / And you're dumb") is buried under deceptively lovely guitar lines on the addictive relationship song "You Brought This on Yourself"; meanwhile, the mini epic "Song for the Fields" opens with an acoustic shuffle and ends with a Doctor Who-creepy keyboard incline. *Winter* is an easy album to enjoy, but a difficult one to trust. **BRIAN RAFFERTY**

## Sage Francis

Human the Death  
Dance ★★½

ANTI/PERTAPI

**Hyper MC who's much too  
inspired by "Me, Myself and I"**  
This is hip-hop for the people," says Sage Francis early on his fourth album. "Stop calling it emo." Stop bellyaching and maybe we will. Francis' relentless self-examination can strike real sparks—he's a clear-eyed lyricist and his unorthodox flow is plenty energetic—but he falls into mawkishness far too often ("All they ask is why I wear these glasses / And all I can tell them is, hell, it's good fashion"). Still, this is more mature than 2005's *A Healthy Distrust*, boasting straightforwardly soulful production and smarter punch lines ("If you ain't dead / You ain't a suicide ght").

MICHAELANGELO MATOS

## Funeral for a Friend

Tales Don't Tell  
Themselves ★★

ATLANTIC

**In screamo, the trouble starts  
when the yelling stops**

Though they're superstars at home, this Welsh scream quintet have yet to conquer the U.S., despite arriving here in 2003 with a thunderously melodic sound and a barge full of press clippings. For their third album, *FFAF* blatantly move beyond the aggressive scene that spawned them and focus on slicker ballads that hint at '80s heartland-rock

# Reissues

The best finds of the month BY WILL HERMES



## The Afghan Whigs

Unbreakable  
(A Retrospective) ★★★

ELECTRA/PHONO

Anticipating the 2009 grunge revival (when nuevo-metal acts like Mastodon discover hooks), this best-of by the Rannel era's horniest dudes reminds us that they never wore flannel and were never really grunge: more like a dapper, unhinged U2 tripping on classic soul drama. And the titles—"Retarded," "Debonair," "Crazy," "Faded"—go a long way toward describing frontman Greg Dulli.

## Various Artists

FabricLive.33:  
Spank Rock ★★★

FABRIC

The YoYoYo crew understands that porn rap can be totally charming if it's done with a sense of humor and fab bass lines. This mix has both—and it's a mix, with shards of "The Dominatrix Sleeps Tonight" and other electro/techno candy popping up just when you thought the DJs had refilled them. But whose idea was Yes' "Owner of a Lonely Heart"?

## King Crimson

The Collectable King Crimson  
Vol. 1: Live in Mainz, 1974, Live  
in Abbey Park, 1974 ★★★

CD/MINOR FROST

From the Larks' Tongues in Aspic/Stareless and Bible Black/Red period, the de facto golden era for these virtuosic geeks. Like most prog rock, it's best when the singer shuts up. And the real action comes when killer drummer Bill Bruford starts chipping away at Robert Fripp's glacial guitar and mellotron riffs like he's playing Atari Breakout.

## Tim Maia

World Psychedelic Classics 4:  
Nobody Can Live Forever:  
The Essential Soul of Tim  
Maia ★★½

LUAKA BOP

Legend has it that this late Brazilian soul man and inspired loony once tried to dose the entire staff of his record company (Phillips) with LSD; he later converted to a religion that worshipped UFOs. His music veers between sweet, ornamented Curtis Mayfield soul and samba-flavored proto disco that even aliens would probably dig.

## Various Artists

Soul Sides Volume Two:  
The Covers ★★★

ZEALOUS

Spin is down with Oliver Wang, a.k.a. Di O-Dub, writer and MP3 blog proprietor (soul-sides.com), so this shout-out is journalistically suspect. Whatever. His second set of obscure old soul also cooks with vintage Jamaican reggae funk and even some 21st-century history: Antibalas' Afro-beat remake of the Willie Colon/Hector Lavoe salsa hit "Che Che Cole," itself inspired from a Ghanaian folk song. African roots run deep.

## Various Artists

Ellen Allien: Time Out Presents  
The Other Side—Berlin ★★★

DEAF DUMB + BLIND

An odd audio/video tour of Berlin hosted by the city's most seductive techno DJ. The CD mix has best hypnotism by Monolake and Ricardo Villalobos (plus the essential German version of Bowie's "Heroes"), while the DVD imparts crucial tourist info, such as where Allien prefers to browse for sex toys.



melodrama. At its best ("Great Wide Open"), Teles recalls Foo Fighters' wimpler singles, but for the most part, it's just a reminder of why even Dave Grohl turns up the screaming now and then. **AARON BURGESS**

## Gang Gang Dance

**Retna Riddim ★★★**

THE SOCIAL REGISTRY

Weird films, weird sounds from New York art-rock crew

This multimedia assault, though high on concept, is the most successful representation yet of Gang Gang's kaleidoscopic, post-primitive, post-punk clamor. Keyboardist and visual artist Brian DeGraw assembled

the 24-minute CD and half-hour DVD from shows, soundchecks, practice tapes, field recordings, live video, tour footage, and newly shot abstract vignettes. As the title suggests, there's more than a bit of synesthesia in play: the pulsing, alien sounds on the CD (throbbing, as in *triste*) suggest the style of the visuals, while the film's lulling edits merge with the music. **J. NIIMI**

## The Horrors

**Strange House ★★**

STOLEN TRANSMISSION

Spooky U.K. sensations need to sharpen their sh\*tick

If the Horrors had crafted an album's worth of creepy goth-

garage tracks that matched the vampish ferocity of single "Gloves" and riotous crowd-pleaser "Sheena Is a Parasite," these young Brits really could've blown the cobwebs off the Cramps' handbook. But Faris Rotter's vocals lack the charisma to give the group a true campy flamboyance, and the insistent, haunted-basement organ riffs scarcely vary, replacing bloodthirsty lovers and serial killers are ghoulish diversions, and Yeah Yeah Yeah's guitarist Nick Zinner drops by, but the Horrors are too shackled by kitsch to scare life into such creepy punk posturing. **JENNIFER MAERZ**



# Ugly Beauty

Withering stories of an empire in magnificent decline

## The National

**Boxer ★★**

BECCAS BANQUET

Since 1999, this Brooklyn-via-Cincinnati quintet has been trying to fuse poetic lyrics, cinematic pull, and nervy, restless rock in a singular way. And on their fourth album, they finally fulfill those ambitions, adding brass, piano, and backup singers to unveil high drama of the blunt, undisciplined sort unheard since the Afghan Whigs' '90s heyday. Yet the National don't just reconvene Greg Dulli's

sweaty seminars on sex and soul. Boxer opens with Matt Berninger's swooping baritone, recounting life in a privacy-invading "Fake Empire," where the oblivious and decadent "tiptoe through your shiny city with our diamond slippers

**The National report on an anguished world of denial.**

on." The lyrics' immediacy recalls 2004's "Wasp Nest," a stunning case commentary chronicling an obsession with a U.S. aristocrat in a decades-old cocktail dress. But here the rhythms accelerate as the album unfolds, and the horns

grow taut, puncturing, even slightly jazz-crazed. "Brainy," about stalking someone with a "fancy, fancy mind," and "Slow Show," about missing someone you've never met, become darting, rhythmic workouts. And "Guest Room," with its troubled couple retiring into suffocation, chamber pops onto even grander, more mysterious terrain. "Sometimes you go la-di-da-di-da-di-da-di/Till your eyes roll back into your head," Berninger explains in the operatic "Racing Like a Pro." And that's the anguished world of denial that the National report on. Horrible or magnificent, it's all theirs. **JAMES HUNTER**

## The Ike Reilly Assassination

We Belong to the Staggering Evening ★★½

ROCK RIDGE

Barroom bard's songs still aren't equal to his words

This Chicago quinter's tipsy, Southern-fried rock serves solely as a backdrop for singer-songwriter Reilly's easy rap and quirky lyrics, which are packed with flat one-liners and the kind of deceptively specific inanity that T.S. Eliot might've enjoyed. But their bar-band charm wilts midway and the weak instrumentation drags like a hangover, at one point even nicking the melody of Billy Joel's "White Wedding" ("I Hear the Train"). Still, in "Fish Plant Uprising," Reilly dares to ask what CNN won't: "Who says you can't toss a fish at a president?" **STACEY K. ANDERSON**

## KRS-One

**Hip-Hop Lives ★★**

KOCH

Searching for new magic with his legendary '80s rival

Twenty years after the South Bronx/Queensbridge throw-down, KRS-One and Marley Marl have squashed their beef; but the results are cause for only quiet celebration. The fortysomething MC still has his fastball—both the title track and "Nothin' New" showcase provocative lyrics, original flows, and uninhibited enthusiasm. The production is another story: Marley Marl provides mostly gloomy backdrops hampered by lackadaisical crate-digging (or fat-out biting). For example, "All School" knocks, but it's only been three years since Ghostface's "Run," which used the same frantic beat to much more dramatic effect. **THOMAS GOLLANOPOULOS**

## Maroon 5

**It Won't Be Soon Before Long ★★½**

OCTONIA/AM

Grammy winners flash their eclectic chops, dirty minds

When your first album sells four million copies, you're bound to try to play out a few musical fantasies with the follow-up, and these modern-pop lotharios are now dabbling in everything from new-wave disco to sleazy funk to big-band balladry. Such diversity suits them well, however, and the only misstep is

frontman Adam Levine's raunchy lyrics, which often examine the joy of knocking boys in such skin-crawling detail that even Prince might tell him to cool it. **TREVOR KELLEY**

## Megadeth

**United Abominations ★★½**

ROADRUNNER

Mustaine and Co. threaten to thrust the government

Megadeth have never adapted their razor-edged shredding to straight-up arena rock as well as Metallica, and even their most ferocious '80s efforts felt a little unresolved. The band has always had a general political awareness, but *United Abominations* is Dave Mustaine's serious stab at protest rock, and the results are similarly mixed. Bad pun aside, the title track is a delightfully jagged slice of agro, while "Gears of War" has a hint of anthemic melodicism. Still, too many of these overly blustery blasts sound like entrance themes for professional wrestlers. **RYLE ANDERSON**

## Mystery Jets

**Zootime ★★½**

DIM MAK

Father and son's giddy racket wakes up the neighbors

Zoos haven't been cool since Paul Simon called graffiti "insincere" in the late '60s, yet Mystery Jets make a helluva case for them on this British family band's debut album. In fact, somewhere between the first and 85th time they scream "Zootime!" in the title track, they whip up a raucous mess of thudding bass drum, Exocet guitar screech, and glorious exuberance. When that energy peaks, with the intricate tempos of "The Boy Who Ran Away" and the Pink Floyd-skimming "Horse Drawn Cart," the group's scuzzy rock is irresistible. And though their bids for introspective gravitas are too ironic, there's enough promise here to rattle more cages soon. **STACEY K. ANDERSON**

## Joell Ortiz

**The Brick (Bodega Chronicles) ★★**

KOCH

The best Latino rapper since Big Pun—and he crushes a lot Joell Ortiz, the latest artist signed to Dr. Dre's Aftermath imprint, is well aware of his niche. On "Hip Hop," he raps, "I don't try to make you dance /



l trip beats." And on this warm-up to his major-label debut, the spirited rapper breezes through four 125-bar epics—the average song contains 48. The coarse production (gritty keys, straight loops, little instrumentation) actually complements his husky vocals, but are three songs about his hometown ("BQE," "Brooklyn Bullshit," "Brooklyn [Remix]") really necessary? **THOMAS GOLANPOULOS**

## Page France

Page France and the Family Telephone ★★½

SUCCOR SQUEEZ

Surprisingly mature insights marred by childlike tics

Page France's handcrafted folk pop pushes awfully hard to be quaint. Between the coy vocals of leader Michael Nau and some overly delicate playing—note the repeated use of bells—this Maryland quartet's third album has a tendency to bog down in preciousness. That's a shame, because Nau's songs are more complex than they initially sound, smartly tackling all sorts of prickly grown-up situations. Anybody who sings "I lie so well / I start to buy it, too" is clearly no stranger to deeper, darker impulses. **JON YOUNG**

## Sa-Ra Creative Partners

The Hollywood Recordings ★★½

RAYBRANCE

Forward-thinking urban music vets take a trip backward This bicoastal progressive soul trio have been music industry players for more than a decade, so maybe it makes sense that their debut full-length is a nostalgia trip to the days when Prince was king, new jack was still swinging, and trip-hop was the future. That's not necessarily a bad thing: Talib Kweli's live rhymes jolt "Feel the Bass" and the Rick James–via–Teddy Riley electro-funk grind "Bitch" works up real sweat. But between the whispery vocals, nodding beats, and grooves that go on forever without really getting anywhere, this too often settles for '90s oxygen-bar ambience—cool, slight, and instantly forgettable. **DAVID FEISNER**

Sa-Ra Creative Partners: Secretly plotting against will.i.am



## Satellite Party

Ultra Payloaded ★★★

COLUMBIA

Rock stars throw a rave in space; the Lizard King abides Satellite Party is built around the unlikely pairing of ex-Jane's Addiction frontman Perry Farrell with former Extreme guitarist Nuno Bettencourt. Yet that meeting of the minds is actually the least nutty thing about this debut, a trippy funk-rock throwdown with guest spots from Fergie, New Order's Peter Hook, and the late Jim Morrison (via a rediscovered recording), plus an overarching concept having something to do with an imaginary environmentalist group called the Solutionists. As one song happily advertises, flower-child "insanity rains." Still, Bettencourt's howling power-glam riffs pair well enough with Farrell's alley-cat wall. **MIKAEL WOOD**

## The Sea and Cake

Everybody ★★★

THRILL Jockey

Chicago lounge dwellers reveal their sneaky edge

A quick taste of the Sea and Cake's sighing voices and moonlit guitars could raise

suspicions of a simple chill-out session. But after a decade-plus in action, Sam Prekop's crew have mastered a more intricate approach, seasoning their gently introspective tales of "distracted and lazy" lovers with stronger ingredients. Here, John McEntire's unusually loud drums issue a bracing rebuttal to the passive melodies, while the psychedelic buzz of "Left On" unleashes the simmering weirdness that's muted elsewhere. **JON YOUNG**

## Shapes and Sizes

Split Lips, Winning Hips, a Shiner ★★★

ASTHMATIC KITTY

Indie rock that almost falls apart—spectacularly Shapes and Sizes don't play songs as much as teeter toward them, frequently finding grand, cabaret-style moments in their slipshod quest for inspiration. When weird sounds find well-placed melodies, it's impossible to turn away—"Alone/Alive" adds threadbare indie guitars to theatrical female vocals, left-field swooshes, and terrific tempo changes, while "The Horse's Mouthy Mouth" feels like Broadway gone wonderfully to seed. Imagine the Fiery Furnaces, if they had more respect for structure and no energy to waste on concepts. **JOSH MODELL**



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Rufus Wainwright: "Voulez-vous coucher avec moi, bitchess!"

### Swizz Beatz

**One Man Band Man ★★½**

UNIVERSAL MOTOWN

And you thought DMX was the unstable one

"My album's crazy," boasts Kaseem Dean, a.k.a. Swizz Beatz, throughout his second solo record. While other rap/R&B producers turned performers have been disappointingly uneven lately—Timbaland, WTF?—*One Man Band Man* makes schizophrenia a virtue. Gaudy beats start and stutter on party joints like the delirious single "It's Me Bitches." Swizz turns socially conscious on the piano pop talk "Part of the Plan," assisted by Coldplay's Chris Martin. But by the chest-thumping "Bust Ya Gunz," the Beyoncé hit-maker is back to his Ruff Ryders roots. Crazy? Possibly. **MARC HOGAN**

### Richard Thompson

**Sweet Warrior ★★★**

SHOUT! FACTORY

Timeless cult hero endures the world with a biting wit

Richard Thompson plays many parts: British folk legend,

electric guitar god, and bitterly funny observer of life's endless disasters. *Sweet Warrior* blends all these roles, turning crushing misery into ripping good entertainment. The jaunty, laugh-out-loud "Bad Monkey" scolds an unreliable lover, and at the other extreme, "Poppy Red" showcases Thompson's heartbreaking croon. Of course, the main attraction remains his bristling, zigzag guitar licks, which still astound nearly 40 years on. **JOH YOUNG**

### Various Artists

**Spider-Man 3: Music From and Inspired By ★★★**

RECORD COLLECTION

Peter and Mary Jane finally put down their lighters

From the power-ballad franchise that brought us mega-weepers "Hero" by Chad Kroeger and Josey Scott and "Vindicated" by Dashboard Confessional, this soundtrack shifts demos for a sharp mix of unreleased all-rock tracks. "Move Away" is the Killers at their new-wave soap opera best, Yeah Yeah Yeahs swagger like sexy champs, the Walkmen are grandly discontent,

Wolfmother unleash a rolling riff bomb, and Black Mountain meander out for a lovely acoustic swoon. **JOHNNY BRISKER**

### Von Südenfed

Tromatic

**Reflexions ★★★½**

DOMINO

Clinically shown to relieve chronic side-project boredom

This loose, inspired collaboration between German electronic duo Jan St. Werner and Andri Toma of Mouse on Mars and terminally cranky Mancunian Mark E. Smith should have been the new Fall album. (It would've been a piece with the garage-tronica of 1997's *Levitate*.) The group has a rowdy blast on tracks like "Serious Brainskin," a glitchy sonic meltdown that brilliantly complements Smith's debased vocalese. **J. NIIMI**

### Rufus Wainwright

**Release the Stars ★★★½**

GEFFEN

If the gay messiah shows, here's his processional

The last time Rufus Wainwright

# TIM ARMSTRONG

## A POET'S LIFE

FEATURING THE HIT SINGLE  
'INTO ACTION'



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walked into a recording studio, it was with a 50-piece orchestra and enough hooks for a pretty great EP. Unfortunately, he left with a double album's worth of material (released in two parts as the critically tolerated *Wont* series, from 2003 and 2004). Here, the multitude of musicians is back, but the songs are actually strong enough to hold the weight of the over-the-top arrangements. Self-producing for the first time, Wainwright leans toward ornate, Nilsson Schmilsson-y chamber pop. The

excellent title track is the best (possibly) Tom Cruise-inspired torch ballad you'll hear in 2007.

LANE BROWN

## Wheat

**Everyday I Said a Prayer for Kathy and Made a One Inch Square ★★★½**

EMPIREAN

**Enigmatic and epic—and they're not from Montreal!**

After their minor 2003 hit "I Met a Girl" and a prolonged hiatus, this hooky Massachusetts band

returns with its fourth and most rousing collection of heart-on-sleeve anthems. Boasting church organs, yearning vocals, and strings, they're no less self-possessed than Arcade Fire, and you probably won't hear three such beautifully sweeping songs start another album this year: the majestic, devotional rock of "Closeness," the hopeful (almost folk-funk!) bounce of "Little White Dove," and the existential, Pavement-gone-power-pop groove of "Move-Move." JASON GROSS

Black clad, blue tinted, and on a mission



# But Seriously

Rap-rock superstars make their bid for significance

## Linkin Park

**Minutes to Midnight  
★★★½**

WINNER BIOS/MACHINE SHOP

"I'm sick of being treated like I have before," Mike Shinoda announces in "Hands Held High," one of the few tracks on the new Linkin Park album that features the rapper/producer's rhymes. Laden with somber references to "bombs on the buses" and Mike's "Little Red Book," "Hands" is the multiplatinum outfit's big antiwar anthem. But Shinoda's line also seems to reflect the

way he and his bandmates feel about their place in the music scene: Though they're heroes to a nation of Hot Topic tweens, Linkin Park are desperate for the sort of respect showered on brainy indie faves like Arcade Fire.

**They're desperate for the respect showered on brainy indie faves.**

So on *Minutes to Midnight*, they give their sound a dramatic makeover with help from producer Rick Rubin, that bearded Pez dispenser of serious-artist cred. Per his rep, Rubin convinced the

band to go organic: "Given Up" and "Bleed It Out" have ragged guitars, handclaps, and random background noise—a deliberate move away from crafty, studio-sweetened hits like "Numb" and "One Step Closer." And in the more densely layered cuts—such as "The Little Things Give You Away," on which singer Chester Bennington describes a scene of post-Katrina desolation—the music privileges texture over catchiness. The arena-mo hooks are still there, of course, as lead single "What I've Done" proves. But this time they feel more like a means to an end. MIKAEL WOOD

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**Lara Croft Tomb Raider: Anniversary** ★★★★★

**Ten years on: Lara Croft is still swinging**

From the swirling snowflakes to the sinuous way that buxom British heroine Lara Croft shimmies along ledges, this captivating update proves beauty isn't just skin deep. Introducing new story elements, challenges, and backdrops to the now-classic 1996 debut of gaming's favorite leading lady, *Anniversary* not only allows you to swing gracefully over a gaping chasm on

a grappling hook, it lets you dodge arrow-spitting booby traps and twirl through the air while unloading twin pistols into dinosaurs. *Anniversary* makes an excellent case for one of entertainment's great truisms: Sick stunts plus massive 3-D environments, brain-boggling puzzles, lead-spitting showdowns, and heaving bosoms equals gaming heaven. **SCOTT STEINBERG**



### Forza Motorsport 2 ★★★

MICROSOFT/XBOX 360

Buy expensive car. Crash expensive car. Repeat.

Comedian Eddie Griffin made the news recently when he crashed an Enzo Ferrari that was valued at \$1.5 million. It would've been cheaper and safer to just fire up this sequel. The Enzo is here, along with the Porsche 911 Turbo and more than 300 other current and classic hardbodies. Tweaking tire pressure, engines, and drivetrains is just as important as mastering braking—sometimes

you feel more like a mechanic than a wheelman. Granted, the focus on authenticity might leave your head—and vehicle—spinning at first, and your poor chassis will take a lot of realistic wear and tear. But a killer suite of online multiplayer options and genuine tracks provide instant relief. Leave your signal-before-merging highway etiquette at the door: *Forza* is for hard-core gearheads only. **S.S.**

## Also Out This Month



### Diner Dash: Sizzle and Serve

EIDOS/NINTENDO DS, PSP

Next time you consider stiffing your waitress, remember the lessons of this food-service homage: One, customers can be pains in the ass. Two, if you're a fledgling restaurateur named Flo, learning to sling food and bus tables while juggling irate patrons is a must. Three, it's no fun when someone spits in your cheesesteak. S.S.



### Brooktown High

KONAMI/PSP

For some, memories of high school consist of four years of wedgies, beatings, and constant put-downs. Here, it's an excuse to canoodle with jailbait of both genders. Customize a nerd, jock, goth, or prep, then tackle tongue-wrestling games and attempt to romance that icy cheerleader. It's just like *The Sims*, only with more blackheads. **S.S.**



**The New York Times**  
**Crosswords**

MAJESCO/NINTENDO DS

The DS touch screen can now be used for brainier pursuits than customizing Pokémon. Crosswords packs more than a thousand puzzles, varying in difficulty according to the *Times*' scale (so "Sunday" is the toughest). It also features competitive games that allow for head-to-head challenges—or for exploiting your friends' knowledge of opera. **K.A.**



**DIRT** ★★★★★

CODEMASTERS/XBOX 360, PC, PS3

**Tear up the asphalt—and sand and mud—rally style**

Like soccer and Scissor Sisters, rally racing captivates European crowds but leaves Stateside audiences cold. It's a strange development, especially considering that the sport—with its fast cars, eye-popping stunts, and huge wrecks—is an adrenaline junkie's dream. *DIRT* might be just the catalyst to bring in new fans: It's a taut racer that splits the difference between simulation and goofy arcade speed-demonry.

Get behind the wheel of a rally racer and kick up some dust across photo-accurate tracks. The game's realism comes from a brand-new physics engine that makes each surface and vehicle combination feel unique, so the trips across the desert in a dune buggy require a totally different set of skills than the raceway courses. It's harder than a hair-pin turn, but the rewards are high-octane. **KYLE ANDERSON**



### The Adventures of Darwin ★★★

03/PS2

**Help prove evolution by acting like an ape**

Japanese imports typically fall into one of two categories: Quirky yet entertaining (*Okomori*) and utter crap (the *Mobile Suit Gundam* series). This current contender—a bizarre, family-friendly strategy outing starring a monkey—is sure to split public opinion. Incorporating elements of cartoon combat and city building, the deliberately paced tale isn't going to win any friends among action-seek-

ling armchair generals. The oddly charming game play mainly involves issuing orders to a pack of primates, solving puzzles, and evolving with the times, ultimately arriving at *Homo sapiens* status. Darwin is largely an acquired taste, and the easy pace is unlikely to tax those opposable thumbs. Still, it's a great choice if you've got several thousand years' worth of evolution to kill. **SS**





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Baby shambles:  
Katherine Heigl and  
Seth Rogen



## Pregnant Pause

40-Year-Old Virgin team offers a tale of the unexpected

**Knocked Up** ★★★ SETH ROGEN, KATHERINE HEIGL UNIVERSAL, R

Writer/director Judd Apatow launches this inconsistently hilarious comedy by conjuring up the scent of Guyville—a tangy aroma redolent of farts, sweat, hormones, and cannabis—as a posse of postcollegiate boys hit roller-coaster rides, horse around their randic house, and implement a variety of fanciful THC-delivery devices. The chubby dude with the curly hair is Ben Stone (Rogen), and one night, while at a club and on his game, he charms the pants off of the dazzling and generally sensible Allison (Heigl). They go back to her place, where they miscommunicate about a rubber, and eight weeks later, the morning-sickness jokes kick in predictably. Ben must now put away childish things, as well as his bong, and win a girl in less than three trimesters.

*Knocked Up* must be the funniest Hollywood romantic comedy since Apatow's 40-Year-Old Virgin (which costarred Rogen). Granted, there are higher compliments—folks weren't exactly snarfing their Pepsis at *The Holiday*—but the movie undeniably offers audiences many abdomen-impairing moments they'll talk (and talk and talk) about: side-splitting, gut-busting, spleen-rupturing stuff built from profane ob/gyn visits,

caring mommies who swear like reservoir dogs, and one classic sex scene. The jokes come in an impressive variety of paces and styles: zany screwballs, droll sliders, conceptual curveballs, and public-hair pitches straight down the middle.

And yet, *Knocked Up* ends up only okay, partly because it doesn't seem grounded in reality; the action transpires in some strange entertainment-based universe. Alison works for the E! channel,

**It offers audiences many abdomen-impairing moments they'll talk (and talk and talk) about.**

Ben and his boys are devising a business scheme involving movie nude scenes, and all the riffs on *Star Wars*, *Back to the Future*, Spielberg, Scorsese, *Lost*, and even *Spider-Man 3* ultimately seem to exist for their own sake. "Marriage is like an unfunny, tense version of *Everybody Loves Raymond*," someone tells Ben at one point. But that isn't at all true—even Raymond knows that—and therefore, it's not really funny and means something only in a world of pure pop.

## REVIEWS MOVIES BY TROY PATTERSON

### Black Sheep ★★★

NATHAN MEISTER, DANIELLE MASON  
R/C FIRST TAKE, NOT RATED

Bloodthirsty wool-bearers run amok in Kiwi horror farce

A genre mash-up that nods cheerfully to *The Birds*, *An American Werewolf in London*, and *Toonies* the Driving Cat, director Jonathan King's first feature doubles as a fable about two grown brothers and triples as a fresh national myth for his native New Zealand. Angus Oldfield (Peter Feeney) is turning the family sheep farm into a genetics lab, and his sensitive brother Henry (Nathan Meister)—who trembles at the very sight of unprocessed wool—goes home to confront him. After a couple of animal-rights moonbeams liberate a mutant lamb, Henry must also confront his darkest fear: "The sheep are revolting!" Though the action eventually gets cluttered—at about the same point that the wit goes slack with gags about prairie oysters—*Black Sheep* remains a memorably crafty production: Seething Weta Workshop ovines charge over the pasture like storm clouds, and their low bleating, rendered in Dolby, spins your head giddy.

### Paprika ★★★

ANIMATED

SONY PICTURES CLASSICS, R  
Trippy anime sci-fi thriller doesn't lack spice

Dr. Atsuko Chiba spends her days researching human brains and her nights flitting through them. This anime head trip—directed by Satoshi Kon (*Tokyo Godfathers*)—pictures Dr. Chiba's team developing a Cronenberg-worthy gizmo that enables therapists to enter their patients' dreams. Some unknown villain has gotten his clunkum on the technology, and he threatens to waste a lot of minds, so Chiba



swings into the unconscious as Paprika—her teen alter ego, both damsel and detective. Though Kon sometimes hits on startling visions (rippled straits from your head last night, he's ultimately more interested in film theory than the Freudian sort, evoking dreams in a way that's most faithful to dream sequences. He gets by on the charm of his superheroine, a pixie adventurer strong with pluck.

### Crazy Love ★★★

DOCUMENTARY

MAGNOLIA, NR RATED

Shocking doc explores Gotham lawyer's criminal mania  
Burt Pugach possesses one of history's most nimble and demented legal minds. His biographer here calls him a "nefarious ambulance chaser," while reporter Jimmy Breslin, who's seen everything, identifies Pugach as "the most visibly insane person" in all New York. At mid-century, his success smelled sweet—a new Cadillac every year, a personal plane, and a nighttime spent swaggering through the Copa as if he were Henry Hill. In the late '50s, he spotted a Bronx beauty named Linda Riss. In the mid-'70s, he married her. In between, their romance erupted as a tabloid epic almost too grotesque to contemplate, much less make up. Dan Klores shares their tale into a documentary as arresting as a Weegee crime-scene photo.



Oliver Driver assumes the Red Position in *Black Sheep*



Linda and Burt  
Pugach in 1974

### SPOTLIGHT ON

## The Music of Crazy Love

"She looked good, she looked fine / And I nearly lost my mind." You've heard Manfred Mann strut through "Do Wah Diddy Diddy" so often that the lyric has gone dull. But Burt Pugach absolutely lost his mind over a woman, and the way *Crazy Love* juxtaposes his vicious passion with Brill Building tunes and Motown sweet talk brings all their twisted nuances to the front of the track. Have you ever been chilled by Smokey Robinson & the Miracles' "You treat me badly / I love you madly"? Here, it really gets a hold on you.

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# Gettin' Tippy

Britpop party girl Lily Allen  
raids and raises the bar

BY MIKAEL WOOD



No hateration:  
Yes, she can  
really sing.

**L**ike any Brit worth her cider, Lily Allen is an exceptionally high-functioning drunk. On her debut album, *Alright, Still*, the 22-year-old daughter of two English showbiz vets describes in hilarious, unsparing detail a privileged London lifestyle of cool clubs and bad boyfriends. Yet tonight in San Diego, Allen sounded as though a month spent on the road had seriously cut into her daily intake of both.

"We've been to some boring-ass towns on this tour," she said with a weary chuckle, "and we heard San Diego was not one of those. Are you gonna prove that to us?" The assembled hipsters immediately roared their acceptance of Allen's challenge, but as it turned out, their participation

**For all Allen's impressive musicality, the crowd came to witness her wild-child persona.**

didn't really matter. "I'm already drunk!" the singer crowed, indicating her endorsement of the time-tested boredom-defeating strategy. Then she knocked back the first in a long line of onstage libations.

The Jäger shots seemed to bolster Allen's frankness. ("This next song is by a band called Keane," she said before an acoustic version of the sensitive piano-pop trio's "Everybody's Changing.") "They're a bit wack.") But the drinking didn't detract from her ability to put on a show. Even though she completed *Alright, Still* before ever playing live, Allen has learned how to command a stage.

Cool-chick casual in a flowing green blouse, short skirt, and gleaming white high-tops, she drew cheers by acting out her lyrics, doing goofy little dances, and tripping out her sparkly pop-reggae jams with R&B fillips that disproved haters' claims that Allen can't

really carry a tune.

The singer was well served by an excellent seven-piece band, which beefed up *Alright*'s elastic grooves and vamped thoughtfully while Allen encouraged fans in the front row to set up a "Lily bar" at the lip of the stage. ("I feel like Lemmy from Motörhead," she giggled.)

Halfway through the 15-song set, the musicians split, save the guitarist and keyboardist, who backed Allen on a

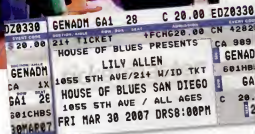


"Meet my good friend, Mr. Jäger."

Lovely rendition of "Naïve," by U.K. indie rockers the Kooks. (Allen, who attended private school with Kooks singer Luke Pritchard, has dished the band as "twats" on her MySpace page.) Still, for all Allen's impressive musicality, the crowd came to witness her

outsized wild-child persona. And she was more than happy to play the role, with boozey between-song banter about the awesomeness of lesbians, her rapidly increasing inebriation, and the unnamed subject of "Friend of Mine," who Allen gleefully announced had recently become a crackhead.

"I love you, too," she squealed at one point, in response to a fan's declaration of devotion. "Just not as much as I love myself."



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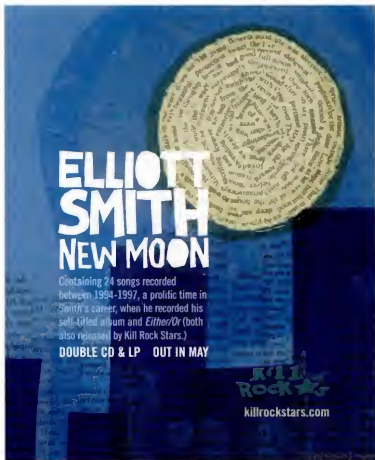
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## ELLIOTT SMITH NEW MOON

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Moby  
PHOTO: DAVE BUSTAV

### I TURN MY CAMERA ON

New York City, Oct. 10/07

SPIN & DKNY Jeans joined forces in presenting "I Turn My Camera On" Moments in Music at Milk Studios.

Music and fashion invites viewed "Moments in Music" captured by famed photographers Alexei Hay, Melissa Auf der Mar, Terry Richardson, Melodie McDaniel, and musicians Moby, Nick Zinner of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Michael Stipe of R.E.M., and many others. Guest DJs Kaiser Chiefs and Teddybears set the vibe while "sassier" cocktails from Goli and sparkling water from Perrier put guests in the mood. Fine-art photo prints, provided by Beth Schiffer Pro Photo Labs were auctioned off for the VH1 Save the Music Foundation, raising close to \$30,000 to help restore instrumental music education in public schools. Special thanks to The Humble Arts Foundation for curatorial support.



Photographer Melissa Auf der Maur  
PHOTO: DAVE BUSTAV



Supermodel Maria Winkler and  
Milk Studios owner Maadack Rassi  
PHOTO: JIM CELESTE



Maria Winkler  
PHOTO: JIM CELESTE



Kaiser Chiefs  
PHOTO: JIM CELESTE



Teddybears get "crazier"  
PHOTO: DAVE BUSTAV



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OKKERVIL  
RIVER  
APRIL 30  
9 PM



### JONATHA BROOKE

MAY 1  
8 PM



### MOE.

MAY 2-6  
8 PM



### MESHELL NDEGECELLO

MAY 7  
8 PM



### AMY WINEHOUSE

MAY 8-9  
8 PM



### DJ ANDY SMITH (PORTISHEAD)

KID BEYOND  
MAY 11  
8 PM



### THE GREYBOY ALLSTARS

MAY 12-13  
9 PM



### LIVE/DIRECT SPANK ROCK & GHOSTFACE

ROXY COTTONTAIL  
DJ NICK CATCHDUBS  
MAY 15 9 PM



### DANIEL JOHNSTON

MAY 16  
8 PM



### LAURIE ANDERSON

MAY 17-18  
7:30 PM



### TALIB KWELI

MAY 18  
11 PM



### SECRET MACHINES

MAY 19  
8 PM



### THE DISCO BISCUITS

MAY 24-25  
9 PM



### MOS DEF-BLACK RADIO

MAY 28  
9 PM



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9 PM



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JUNE 6  
6 PM



### LIVE/DIRECT DJ DRAMA & WILLIE THE KID

THE RUB DJS  
JUNE 9  
9 PM



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THE SNAKE THE CROSS THE CROWN  
JUNE 19  
7:30 PM



### SHINY TOY GUNS

STARS OF TRACK AND FIELD  
THE HOURLY RADIO  
JUNE 25  
9 PM



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# 6TH ANNUAL SPIN@STUBB'S

Austin, TX, 03.16.07

For the sixth year running, SPIN@Stubb's makes its way back to South by Southwest for yet another unforgettable party. DJs Young Love, Hugh Cornwell, the legendary voices of the Stranglers, and Ian of Uncut hit the decks

while the Buzzcocks, Kings of Leon, Galactic, Mew, the Fratellis, and Blanche rocked the house for a crowd of 4,000 partygoers. Special guest host Perry Farrell introduced the Buzzcocks, while Pete Townshend made his own guest appearance and took the stage with the Fratellis to perform the Who song "The Seeker."

1. Perry Farrell  
introducing Buzzcocks



PHOTOS:  
1-7 and 9-14 by Tony Nelson  
8 by Owen Fagan



2. Buzzcocks



3. The crowd at Stubb's



4. Tracee Mar Miller of Blanche



5. Jonas Björke of Mew



6. Pete Townshend plays a surprise set.



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8. Kirsten Dunst with Razorlight's Johnny Borrell



9. Galactic performs with Lyrics Born



10. The Fratelli's Jon Fratelli



11. Matthew Followill of Kings of Leon



12. Fans enjoying the show



12. Rocking out



14. Smiling for the camera



Cold War Kids

## SCHUBAS ROUND 'EM UP

Austin, TX, 03.15.07

Schubas hosted its 11th Annual SXSW Round-Up at Yard Dog co-sponsored by Spin, Miller, Saucony, and Maxell. Rockers gathered at the gallery turned live music venue to hear tunes from the Cold War Kids, 1900s Bishop Allen, Midlake, Elvis Perkins, Prototypes, David Vandervelde and the Moon Station House Band. Attendees also scored Maxell products compliments of the brand.

PHOTOS: CHAD WADSWORTH



## SXSW/SPIN GIFTING SUITE

Austin, TX, 03.15.07- 03.17.07

Over 40 bands and artists made their way through our Media and Gifting Suite at the Hilton during South by Southwest. Bands like Bloc Party, the Rapture, Illinois, Matt & Kim, and many others cozied up for interviews with SPIN.com's Peter Gaston. Artists went home with swag from Miss Sixty/Energie, Unionbay, Hanes, Old Spice, SESAC, and scored a sneak preview of MLB's 2K7.



The Editors of Elshay

PHOTO: AMY LIU



Buzzcocks get interviewed by SPIN.com's Dominic DiMaggio

PHOTO: ALISON LEVITS



Spin's Peter Gaston gets cozy with Matt and Kim.

PHOTO: ALISON LEWIS




Tokyo Police Club playing MLB2K7 on Xbox 360

PHOTO: AMY LIU

Spin's Winkler from The Fray

PHOTO: AMY LIU

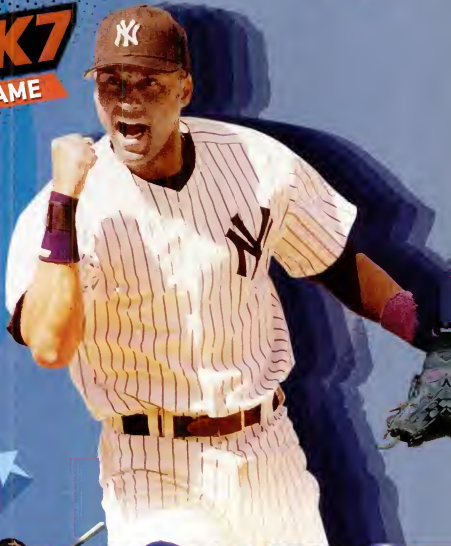


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Tetsuo rock hotter  
short wax at the  
Ear Wash Café.

72 HOURS IN

# Detroit

It's the city that gave the world Motown, Kiss, Eminem, techno, Alice Cooper, and the Nuge. Whether you're a record collector, a style maven, a garage-rock aficionado, or a grease monkey, D-Town has got more cultural options than Kid Rock's got furs. BY EVE DOSTER

## Getting There

Because the place is referred to as the Motor City, it's best to rent a car. For as little as \$19.99 a day, Hertz ([www.hertz.com](http://www.hertz.com)) is a steal. For taxi/car service, call Metro Airport Taxi at 800-745-5191 or Metro Cars at 800-456-1701. There's also the \$23-a-day Rent-a-Jalopy (17425 Telegraph Rd., 313-535-5147).

## WHERE TO STAY

### THE INN ON FERRY STREET

84 E. Ferry St.  
The four Victorian homes and two carriage houses that compose the Inn on Ferry Street are adjacent to museums and galleries galore. Rooms run about \$140 a night. (313-871-6000)

### DETROIT MARRIOTT AT THE RENAISSANCE CENTER

300 Renaissance Center  
This 73-story landmark riverfront hotel overlooks Hart Plaza, home of the annual Movement festival. Rooms start at \$149 a night. (313-568-8000)

## DAY 1

### Breakfast EVIE'S TAMALES 3454 Bagley St.

One of the more authentic establishments in Detroit's historic Mexicantown; for less than ten bucks, you can feast on delectable tamales or a steak-and-egg breakfast that'll distort the gut for hours. (313-843-5056)

### Lunch

#### HONEST JOHN'S BAR & NO GRILL 488 Seiden St.

Proprietor/philanthropist John Thompson co-opted the dilapidated Cass Corridor building, where his troubled mother once turned tricks, and refashioned it into a backslappin' neighborhood bar with an ultra-amiable staff. Besides offering humorous deli-style sammies and hearty soups, Honest John's donates some of its profits to help Detroit's poor—see "Dips for Turkeys," a wacky midwinter fundraiser at which participants jump into a frosty Detroit River. It's also one of the few joints in town with Wi-Fi access. (313-832-JOHN)

## Afternoon

Revisit the 1960s at the hallowed **Motown Historical Museum** (2648 W. Grand Blvd., 313-875-2264), tucked unassumingly in its original location in a row of houses on a residential street. Check out Michael Jackson's sequined gloves, early reverb techniques (a hole cut into the ceiling), Berry Gordy's apartment, and the chill-inducing Studio A, where Motown's ghosts bounce from wall to wall. Then amble through downtown's crown jewel, **Campus Martius Park** ([www.campusmartiuspark.com](http://www.campusmartiuspark.com)), where you can hear live music or even partake of some outdoor yoga. Fifteen minutes on the freeway will get you to the "Rock Stars' Cars & Guitars" exhibit (opening June 5) at the **Henry Ford Museum** (20900 Oakwood Blvd., Dearborn, 313-271-1620)—ideal for gearheads and groupsies alike.

### Dinner

#### SLOWS BAR BQ 2138 Michigan Ave.

Detroit's latest hot spot, this high-end Southern barbecue is revered for its modern take on

soul food and creative vegetarian options, hence the late-night hipster visits. The macaroni and cheese (try adding some North Carolina sauce) and "Special Purpose" (a burger inspired by Steve Martin's classic comedy *The Jerk*, featuring bacon, spicy onions, and smoked Gouda) are musts. (313-962-9828)

## Evening

A tornado of bands like the White Stripes, Adult., and the Electric Six cut their teeth at Detroit's legendary **Magic Stick/Garden Bowl** (4120 Woodward Ave., 313-833-9700). But the eye of Detroit's musical storm is a collection of underground treasures, such as **LJ's Lounge** (2411 Michigan Ave., 313-662-0013), where in-house DJs and bartenders include a handful of local rock stars (the Von Bondies' Marcie Bolen, for example), and the cavernous **Bohemian National Home** (3009 Tillman St., 313-737-6606), a nifty place to see avant-garde jazz and experimental, noise-heavy rock'n'roll.

## Late Night

Funk Night at **CAID**, Contemporary Art Institute of Detroit (5141 Rosa Parks Blvd., 313-899-CAID), is a recurring dance party that's been known to spill over into the parking lot and beyond. Come hear this soundtrack of forgotten funk and soul on the last Friday of every month. The art nonprofit also hosts Northern Soul Night and rock shows.

## DAY 2

### Breakfast

#### RUSSELL STREET DELI 2465 Russell St.

You'll have to share your table with other guests because of the crowds that descend on this place, but it's worth it. The daily specials are always a bargain, and the vegetarian hash is unusually savory. (313-567-2900)

### Lunch

#### ROMA CAFE 3401 Kropfle St.

Detroit's oldest Italian restaurant is steeped in old-world romanticism, down to the tuxedo-clad waiters who dote on and flirt with guests. Lunch runs \$13 to \$25. (313-831-5940)

## Afternoon

Record collectors the world over make pilgrimages to Detroit because of the seemingly endless supply of classic and obscure vinyl confections. Sort through the rock, funk, and R&B in the dusty bins at **People's Records** (615 W. Forest Ave., 313-831-0864), **Maya's Used Records** (126 W. Eight Mile Rd., Hazel Park, 248-547-7470), and **Record Graveyard** (10201 Joseph Campau St., Hamtramck, 313-870-9647).

### Dinner

#### POLISH VILLAGE CAFE 2990 N. Yemans, Hamtramck

## HOTEL YORBA



Hotel Yorba inspired the White Stripes song.

THE WHITE STRIPES

This subterranean restaurant feels more like home than your own house, probably because your residence doesn't feature a hearty "city chicken" (breaded pork and veal), traditionally dressed waitresses, and massive goblets of icy Polish beer. (313-874-5726)

## Evening

Known for having one of the best sound systems in the country, **Small's** (10339 Conant, Hamtramck, 313-873-1117) has a close-to-perfect setup for watching live rock 'n' roll. Less known for its acoustic prowess

breakfast for \$2, and also for spawning a boy-girl jug-band outfit called, appropriately, Two Dollar Breakfast. The band is no more, but Steak Hut's hungry minions are still greeted by the soothing sounds of acoustic strumming every Sunday morning. (313-961-0659)

## Lunch

**LA SHISH**  
22041 Michigan Ave., Dearborn  
Dearborn has one of the densest Arab populations outside of the Middle East and is a treasure trove of exotic food and art. La Shish is known for its

**Shoe Fair** (5872 W. Fort St., 313-843-4020), which stocks the latest sneakers at discount prices, but also has a seemingly endless supply of vintage shoes from the '60s and '70s just waiting to be snapped up.

## Dinner

**THE DAKOTA INN RATHSKELLER**  
17324 John R. St.  
Spätzle, schintzell, and schwefelrich are but a few spittle-worthy reasons to eat here, but to mention the actual lederhosen-dad oompah band. This Bavarian oasis in the middle of a slightly blighted part of town encourages visitors to bask in the warmth of some "olde-style" merrymaking (with the aid of plenty of frothy ale) without denting your wallet. (313-867-9722)

## Evening

If you've got the summertime blues and need a little holiday spirit, the **Comet Bar** (128 Henry St., 313-964-1508) is decorated for Christmas year-round, complete with blinking lights and dancing Santas; they also have killer karaoke nights and a backyard patio with picnic tables and a funky family-reunion vibe—as long as your family includes hipsters, vets, and transies. It's right up the road from the **Motor City Brewing Works** (470 W. Canfield St., 313-832-2700), where DJs like Mick Collins (the Dirtbombs) and Jim Diamond (Chetto Records) throw back microbrews and spin tasty Detroit rock and R&B. If you need a little slice of the South in the Great Lakes, hit up **Baker's Keyboard Lounge** (20510 Livernois Ave., 313-345-6300), a jazz institution since the '30s that also offers some tasty soul food.

## Late Night

**LAFAYETTE CONEY ISLAND**  
118 W. Lafayette Blvd.  
Coney dogs are a regional phenomenon, and there are a number of places that claim to serve the best in town, but this spot lovingly wraps its franks in mustard, onions, chili, and cheese. They go down smooth whether you're soured or stone sober. (313-964-8198)



## Cobra Style

The Detroit Cobras' Rachel Nagy on her hot spots

### MAJESTIC THEATER

4140 Woodward Ave.  
Nagy says: "This is the place that everything revolves around in Detroit rock music. Big bands play in the theater, and there's a room upstairs where the smaller ones play. They've got a place to sit after a show, you can pick up a slice to soak up the booze."

### THE OLD MIAMI

3930 Cass Ave.  
"It's an interesting mix—there are punk rocks, but it's also a veterans' bar. You don't really remember the shows you see here. I usually get drunk and stumble home. Luckily, it's within walking distance of my house."

### THE ROYAL OK MUSIC THEATRE

318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak  
"It's in the suburbs, where all the white people with money hang out. You can put on a dress and make jokes buy you drinks."

### 2500 CLUB

2506 Park St.  
"Metal bands play here sometimes, but it's also a drag club—you can have a cocktail with the transvestites!"

### THE BRONX BAR

4476 Second Ave.  
"It's a little dark bar with a great jukebox. It's so dark that when there was that big blackout a few summers ago, the Bronx stayed open, since it didn't look any different than usual. We barbed outside."

### RAVEN LOUNGE & RESTAURANT

5345 Chene St.  
"The Raven's been around forever. It's in a really fucked-up, burned-out area, but it's great. Old blues guys play on the weekends, and the bartender tries up some mean catfish."

### COMERICA PARK

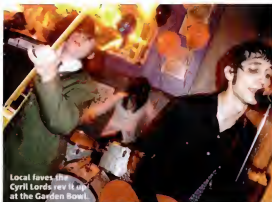
2100 Woodward Ave.  
"The Tigers did well last year, so now the games are bringing in more people. If you're down on your luck and need to make a few dollars, you can guide suburbanites to empty parking lots, charge them, and leave."

### EL COMAL RESTAURANT

3456 W. Vernor Hwy.  
"This place has the greatest Mexican food. It used to be in someone's basement with folding chairs, but they have a really nice restaurant now. They go way beyond tacos—there are these things called pupusas, which are tortillas stuffed with pork and cheese. They're the shit."

### MAYE'S USED RECORDS

126 W. Eight Mile Rd.  
"I've been going here for years. It's run by the old creepy guy who reminds me of Comic Book Guy from The Simpsons. It's just this dirty, dirty place jam-packed with records. You can spend a whole day rummaging there. Afterward, you're itching and sneezing a lot, but it's worth it."



Local faves, like Cyril Lord's rev bar at the Garden Bowl.

and more to her penchant for anarchy, the **Painted Lady** (2930 Jacob St., Hamtramck, 313-874-2991) is one of the last surviving old-school punk-rock hangouts in the area. There's also the **Belmont** (10215 Joseph Campau St., Hamtramck, 313-871-1966), home of Mademoiselle Mondays, where guests can get a manicure and martini for ten bucks.

## Late Night

Blow a wad at the swankiest of the three downtown casinos, **Greektown Casino** (555 E. Lafayette Blvd., 888-771-4FUN), where the party quite literally never stops. There's also the more rough-and-tumble **Motor City Casino** (1901 Grand River Ave., 313-237-7711) or the **MGM City Detroit Casino** (1300 John C. Lodge Fwy., 877-888-2121), for a little slice of Vegas kitsch delivered directly to the Midwest.

## DAY 3

### Breakfast

**STEAK HUT**  
1555 W. Lafayette Blvd.

A few years back, this greasy spoon became an unlikely local treasure for offering a two-egg, hash browns, and toast

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# Blitzkrieg Pop

An American novelist tours Germany and learns *die Kinder* are alright BY JOE HILL



**N**O NEWS FLASH HERE: AMERICA'S NO. 1 EXPORT IS ITSELF, AND Deutschland is buying. A variety of aggressive, bred-in-the-USA infections have been making a yeasty stink in the Fatherland's metaphorical crotch over the past decade: Britney and Paris, *Wild Hogs*, and, this past March, yours truly.

February saw the release of my first novel, *Heart-Shaped Box*, about a bad-tempered death-metal god—think Motorhead's Lemmy, who even less pretty—who buys a haunted suit on the Internet. Aside from the obvious Nirvana reference, the novel's four parts have titles lifted from hard-rock tracks ("Black Dog," "Ride On," "Hurt," "Alive"), and the story is at least in part a meditation on the way a certain kind of damaged person will turn to loud, angry music as a way to armor himself against the world's sharp edges. My German publisher saw in this aspect of the book a clever promotional possibility: Why not send me on a tour, not of bookstores, but of clubs, to put on readings between performances by local rock acts? I figured I had at least as much right to tour German rock clubs as David Hasselhoff—we both have the same approximate amount of musical talent (none), but at least I know it.

The tour kicked off in Hamburg, where I met up with a voice actor named Tommy Morgenstern. In our performances together, we'd be taking turns—Tommy reading a chapter in German for every chapter I'd read in English. Tommy is young and sturdy with a head of handsomely ruffled hair, and, most impressively, he is the German voice of Beavis and Butt-head.

Our first reading was at a broken-glass-and-puke-on-the-floor punk club on the edges of the Reeperbahn, where prostitution is legal and women pose in their frillies behind neon-lit windows. The band that was supposed to open for us didn't show. Their bus broke down in the Netherlands—how rock'n'roll is that? Their replacements were a grotty-looking crew in stained black denim who used their music as a blunt instrument to bludgeon the crowd. I liked 'em, although one of their songs had only a single discernible line, repeated

to the point of absurdity—"We blow you away!"—a statement that was, frankly, a case of wishful thinking. The surprise to me was that this very Teutonic band sang in English...a language also well understood by the vast majority of the audience. For the German entertainment junkie, at least a passing familiarity with English seemed essential.

I had only been in the country a day and already felt the taint of cultural imperialism on me. I took my uneasy conscience with me to Berlin, where the next night, Tommy and I got to talking about what it takes for a hometown act to make it in Germany, to get a native signal through all that American noise. Tommy spoke disdainfully of the *American Idol*-style programming swamping the German airwaves, churning out assembly-line pop stars, while down-in-the-streets rock bands struggle for attention. I was with him on that—even though *Idol* derives from a European show, the U.S. made it bigger and fatter and more omnipresent. The winners of such contests are sexy and can carry a tune, but no one will be threatened

by their ideas. They don't have any. Whereas, you can't really separate Bruce Springsteen's popularity from his particular point of view.

Out of guilt for whatever role I was playing in helping to poison Germany's cultural well, I was drowning myself in Bavarian beer in a Munich club on my last night in the country when my final opening act climbed onto the stage. Three chords later I was sitting all the way up in my chair. The band was called Five! Fast!! Hits!!!, and for the next eight minutes (how long it took them to play four songs), I was fixated. Dressed in a suit and skinny tie, with hair to his shoulders, the lead guitarist looked and played like a long-lost Followin' brother. The singer was a pale-haired wisp of a boy, so at ease onstage he couldn't actually stay there—instead, he drifted into the crowd and sang while lounging among some college girls who were quickly overcome by the giggles. First, I was thinking the band sounded like the Strokes playing behind Billie Joe Armstrong; then they did a song that was like Fountains of Wayne covering Johnny Cash, which was when it finally hit me that, really, they just sounded like themselves, and I could finish my beer without guilt.

So that's Germany right now. Its people are stuck with the sometimes crude, sometimes beautiful influence of our culture, but they're watching closely and taking what they like and mashing it together into something uniquely *them* and not us. Germany has Five! Fast!! Hits!!!, clever and full of fire, and by the time they were done, I was just counting myself lucky to have a chance to appear anywhere near them.

So I did my reading, and everyone laughed in the right places, and it was a good time, but I cut it shorter than usual, because no matter what language you speak, when you get out of work and head to a club with your friends, you just wanna rock, and Five! Fast!! Hits!!! had another set to play. ☼

Joe Hill is the author of *Heart-Shaped Box* and a forthcoming book of stories, *20th Century Ghosts*.



SHINE





Were Innocent In Every Way Like Apple Pie And Cheesecake  
—Nirley Gire

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